

S E R M O N S,

B Y

JOHN HARMER, K

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A N D

Formerly of the University of OXFORD.

"In a polite age almost every person becomes a
 "reader, and may receive more instruction
 "from the press, than from the pulpit."

The MORALIST.

"Truth is pleasantly situated in an humble vale
 "between two swelling extremes."

Dr. FULLER.

Ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρυττομεν Χριστον ἐσταυρωμενον, Ἰουδαίους
 μὲν σκανδαλον, Ἕλλησι δὲ μωριαν

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THE MUSEUM

JOHN A. R. M. H. S.
HIS MUSEUM
AND BUTLER'S MASTON
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DEDICATION.

THIS volume of Sermons
is, with the greatest respect and
gratitude, dedicated to the wor-
thy Inhabitants of *St. Saviour,*
Southwark,

By their much obliged,

A N D

Faithful humble Servant,

J. H A R M E R.

No. 7, CHURCH-STREET,
Sept. 1, 1787.



DECISION

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons (those excepted, which were preached at *Litchfield* Cathedral, and the Magdalen Chapel) are an abstract from various French authors, of which I have never seen a translation. I have taken great liberty in altering the sense of the authors, where I apprehended the least deviation from the doctrines of our established church. I have also added thoughts of my own, or some commentator, which occurred at the time of translating. Some of them have been preached to large and respectable audiences. And although the ear be a more favourable judge than the eye, I hope the latter will not be inexorable

If

If candid criticism shall point out a sentence not strictly agreeable to the doctrines of our church, it will oblige me. But the secret attacks of disappointment, or malevolence, I shall continue to treat with silent neglect. My grateful thanks are due to those gentlemen and ladies by whose subscriptions I was encouraged in this publication.

3 NO 63

SUBJECTS.

S U B J E C T S.

S E R M O N I.

On the Success of the Gospel. From 2 Cor.
Chap. ii. Verse 14.

Thanks be unto God who causeth us always to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Page 13.

II.

On the Success of the Gospel. From Matthew
xiii. Verse 31, 32.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field:

Which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it.

Page 29.

III.

On Remembrance of the Creator, from Eccle-
siastes, Chap. xii. Verse 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

Page 47.

On

[x]

IV.

On Remembrance of the Creator, from *Ecclef.*
Chap. xii. Verse 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.
Page 63.

V.

On the Mystical Union with Christ. From
2 Cor. Chap. v. Verse 17.

*If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature ;
old things are passed away ; behold all things are
become new.*
Page 79.

VI.

On God's Departure from Sampson. From
Judges, Chap. xvi. Verse 20.

He knew not that the Lord was departed from him.
Page 94.

VII.

On Peter's Tears. From *Matthew* xxvi.
Verse 75.

*And Peter remembered the words of Jesus,
which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou
shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept
bitterly.*
121

VIII.

On hearing the Gospel. From *Luke*, Chap.
viii. Verse 5.

*A sower went out to sow his seed : and as he
sowed, some fell by the way-side ; and it was trod-
den down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.*
Page 133

IX.

On a Funeral Occasion. To die the Christian's
Gain. From *Revelations* xxi. Verse 4.

*And God shall wipe away all Tears from their
eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sor-
row nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain:
for the former things are passed away.*

Page 153.

X.

On the Vision and Presence of our Saviour.
From *Philipians* i. Verse 23.

*For I am in a straight between two, having a de-
sire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far
better.*

Page 173.

SERMON

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3 NO 63

S E R M O N I.

ON THE

S U C C E S S

OF THE

G O S P E L.

2 COR. Chap. ii. Verse 14.

*Thanks be unto God who causes us always
to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest
the favour of his knowledge by us in every
place.*

IT is a sentiment, deeply engraven in the
heart of man, that thanks are due to
the Deity, and that he ought to be praised
for every happy event. However self-love
may prevail, however prone to flatter our-
selves, or, as a prophet speaks, *to sacrifice
to our own net, and burn incense to our
own drag*; yet few are so presumptuous as
to ascribe all the honour of prosperous

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events

events to themselves. Great captains, with all their ambition and jealousy for their reputation, appear to be willing that Heaven shall have a share of their glory, and to confess that the fortune of battle in some degree depends on God's favour or displeasure. Even heathen generals, when they have gained a signal victory, stormed cities or subdued provinces, have given thanks to the Gods for their success.

If they raised trophies, as monuments of their exploits, they put on them the names of *Mars* or *Jupiter*, consecrating to them those spoils which they supposed were taken by their assistance. If they entered in triumph into their cities, the pomp of their triumph ended by *sacrifices* and thanksgivings. In short, in *all times*, and among *all people*, we have seen those who have testified their gratitude to the Deity; and amidst the praises of their poets, the panegyrics of their orators, and applause of the people, we see hymns have been sung, incense has smoked, and temples have been built in honour of the first cause of all their prosperity. But if in the world, where it is so usual to forget God, mankind have rendered thanks to him for their success in which second causes have been instrumental - if when a general has taken towns, and gained battles by his arms,

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and his conquests appear to have been the consequence of his wisdom and valour, he has nevertheless ascribed it to God's favour and goodness; much more ought this to be done in the church. For herein conquests are gained without arms, victories are won without human power, without human means, and even contrary to the order of nature. *God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and things that are despised, yet things that are not to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh may glory before him; therefore, all the praise and glory must be to him. They who triumph in Christ, must ascribe all to him to whom they owe them. Those happy triumphers who captivate the soul and not the body; who shed no other blood than their own, who slay only vice and error, who draw tears from repenting sinners in order to fill them with the consolations of pardoning grace; those triumphers, who have no other arms than the sword of the spirit, the word of God; these also have always in their mouth a blessed be God.* They strip themselves of all honour, to give it to their blessed Master. In all places they will erect trophies to his glory. More than happy and contented to be instruments in his hand, they will cry, *Thanks be to God who causes us always*

to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place.

This is in particular the voice of St. Paul, that great *chosen vessel*, always so careful to give all glory to God. The success that he had in preaching the Gospel in all places, particularly in Macedonia, when he wrote this Epistle, is the subject of this exclamation full of triumph. He had made many conquests in the conversion of souls, in the cities of Amphipolis, Thesolonica and Phillippi. Divine Providence had directed him to these places, when he thought of returning a second time to Corinth. It was therefore both to exalt the glory of his Apostleship in the esteem of the Corinthians, and to render to God his due praise, that the Apostle exclaims, *Thanks be to God who causes us to triumph in Christ.*

But when we take a subject that relates to the work of God, and apply it to ourselves, the distance is so great between the Apostles and other ministers, between their labours and success, and our own, as hardly to allow a comparison. But although we follow them at a distance, we walk in the same path, and labour for the same Master. It is also the favour of his knowledge, we make manifest, and if there be any fruit it is to his glory. Permit me then to borrow
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the voice of the Apostle, to give thanks unto God for the continuance and success of his Gospel.

In these words we see, First, the triumph of the servants of Christ, in the manifestation of the favour of his knowledge.

Secondly, We see thanksgivings to God, as the author of this triumph.

From the first particular, I shall speak of the instruments God uses, of their work and their glory.

From the second, I shall speak of the first cause, who excites them and blesses them with success. Hence it will appear that all the glory is due to Heaven, and that we ought to mingle our grateful acknowledgments with those of the Apostle. *Thanks be to God who causes us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us; and those holy angels who do his pleasure rejoice and triumph with us!*

This expression of triumphing in Christ, is figurative, borrowed from the custom of the Romans, with whom the honour of a triumph was the reward of their conquering generals. To say a general had been honoured with a triumph, was the best way of expressing his victories and success. This idea of a triumph brings that of a battle, a disputed battle. It supposes a victory,

an illustrious victory. An historian observes that Rome never granted a triumph where there were not at least five or six thousand of the enemy slain on the spot.

It is therefore to mark the great number of conquests the Apostles made in the world by their preaching, and their glorious success in the conversion of sinners, that St. Paul says, *Thanks be to God who causes us to triumph in Christ.* He explains what he means by this triumph in Christ, when he adds, *and makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.* This triumph consisted in the manifestation of the saving knowledge of Christ by the gospel, in dissipating the clouds of vice and error by light of truth. A triumph which was the happiness of those who were conquered, as well as the glory of the conquerors: a triumph in a sense like that of the spirit of God over the disorder of the primæval chaos, making order and beauty to reign where all was horror and confusion. Instead of the darkness of idolatry and confusion of superstition which then overspread the face of the earth, the Apostles brought order into the world, by the manifestation of the truth of the gospel, *by faithfully declaring the counsel of God.* The Apostle calls it triumphing in Christ, because it was by his power and to his glory they

they got these victories. It was not for themselves the Apostles contended. It was not in their own cause they were conquerors: it was in the cause of Christ. He is the subject of their science, and of all their preaching. *They determined to know nothing but Christ crucified.* It is him they propose as the author of salvation, the object of adoration and faith; it is in him they triumph. They did not, like the disciples of philosophers, or heresyarchs, labour for themselves to promote their own reputation; but to exalt the name of Jesus, and promote his glory, was all for which they lived. The disciples of Socrates, and of other chief sages, formed different families of philosophers: we see to the present times the divisions made by the first followers of that impostor, Mahomet.

But the Apostles, divested of self-seeking, laboured only for the good of others, by extending the bounds of the Redeemer's empire, in spreading the favour of his knowledge in every place. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for his sake.* Thus, when they were successful, *they triumphed in Christ*, in his cause, and for his glory. So do all his faithful ministers, who preach not themselves, and live not to themselves. They may say in their success (though far from

from equal to that of the Apostles) it is a victory over the impenitence and error of mankind, that gives them cause to rejoice that *God makes them to triumph in Christ*. The oracles of God speak of three grand triumphs; that of Christ upon the cross, over the devil and sin; that of a preached Gospel, over the world, idolatry, error and vice; and that of Christ, the judge, over death and the grave.

Christ upon the cross triumphed alone, *spoiling principalities and powers, he triumphed gloriously over them*. Christ in his glory will triumph with all his faithful people; but in the preaching of his gospel he triumphs by the ministers of religion. *Thanks be to God who causes us to triumph in Christ*.

This is the glory of our ministry; to be instruments by which God made manifest the *saving knowledge of Christ*. This is the dignity of our office; to triumph in our Redeemer is the glory of our success. The most noble employment of a creature is to be an instrument in the hand of the creator, to accomplish his gracious designs. This appointment, in some degree, draws the creature out of his native nothingness, and raises him to true greatness.

They who enter into the designs of God, who concur with him in the finest and

and most noble of his works, have doubtless a more excellent ministry than they who act without knowing why, or are employed in works of short duration and small importance. But the employment of those whom God sends for the salvation of others is of the first consequence, of the highest importance. They run not as uncertainly; they labour to promote the most noble designs of God. For the most grand of his projects has not been to form a world, to animate and give motion to matter, but to form a world of happy souls, a glorious body of which Christ is the head, and whose members are all holy. What an honour to be co-workers with God, in forming such a glorious body!

Were it permitted to men to chuse to what work they shall be appointed, that of power and justice, in which angels have been employed, would not be so eligible as this of mercy and grace in which, as the Apostle says, *We are workers together with God.* Had God employed us to form the canopy of Heaven, or to lay the foundations of the earth, we could not herein have triumphed as being conducive to make mankind for ever happy. Nor could we have triumphed, as having contributed to a work that shall last for ever: *for the Heavens*

Heavens and the Earth shall pass away. But when God designs to make us instruments to save souls from eternal death, what cause for joy and triumph! How blessed to contribute to that work which is for eternity, to the building of the Church of Christ, which is founded on the rock of ages!

To what other employment soever God might have appointed us, it could not have been attended with so much honour. It is more glorious and blessed to wield the sword of the spirit, the word of God, than that flaming sword which drove Adam out of Paradise, or that slew so many thousands of Assyrians in one night. Then God triumphed by the ministry of angels, when the sword slew all the first-born of Egypt, and those forty thousand in the camp of Sinacharib.

But these bloody triumphs are not so happy as those gained over men by the preaching of the gospel. Hence the Apostle cries, *Thanks be to God who causes us to triumph in Christ.*

To manifest the knowledge of Christ is a usual expression; but, *the favour of his knowledge*, is an expression new and uncommon. It seems to point out the ease and rapidity with which the gospel was made manifest: coming with divine power

to the heart, and being received in the Holy Ghost, in much assurance and sweetness; as the odour of a sweet ointment is spread abroad, as soon as the box is opened that contains it. The Apostles were those chosen vessels, who, like that box of precious ointment, contained the odoriferous balm, the sweet perfume of gospel doctrine; and, as the box of ointment with which the woman anointed the feet of Jesus, *filled the whole house with its sweet savour*, so in all places, the Apostles spread the savour of the gospel in all places, by which many were sweetly drawn to Christ, and their wounded consciences healed.

Hence the Apostle. *We are a sweet savour of Christ to them that are saved, and to them that perish; to one we are the savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death.* The expression also denotes the excellency of the doctrine of the gospel. It is compared to a sweet balm for its purity, and healing virtue. But to the nominal Christian, or profane libertine, there is nothing in it that is sweet and attractive. The swine's delight, is in filthy mire, not in pearls or sweet odours. So brutish men turn away from the pearls and sweet savour of gospel truths; and, although sometimes (such is their excellency) they are drawn by them a little from their evil ways

ways, yet they soon return to their sins again, *as the dog to his vomit.* But to them *who have tasted how good and gracious the Lord is, these blessed truths, these waters of life, are sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.* A commentator applies them to those garments of the divine bridegroom, spoken of in the Song of Solomon, *which smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.* His nuptial day is applied to the time of the gospel, and the calling of the Gentiles, and their union to the church's head. It was then the heavenly bridegroom drew to himself his spouse, the Gentile church, *by the savour of his ointments.* It was then, in a peculiar manner, *his name began to be as ointment poured forth to attract the chaste virgin's love.* Then the Lord caused his servants to triumph in Christ, by making *manifest the savour of his knowledge,* by their preaching.

Lastly, this expression seems to allude to the nature of the ministry of the gospel, which is a kind of unction. Ministers of the gospel are called, *the anointed of the Lord.* So indeed, are all real christians, which is implied in their name. Christ signifies anointed. *He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and of his fulness his real members receive grace upon grace.* Hence, God says, *touch not mine*

mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. They have received an unction from the holy one who teaches them the will of God, and rightly to divide the word of truth. Hence, the spreading this favour is attributed to them who have been anointed in their consecration to the ministry of the word. The Apostles in particular were happy in being instruments of making manifest this odour of the knowledge of Christ. St. Paul adds, *in all places*; by which is taught the nature of the gospel ministry, which is proposed *to all in every place.*

It was no longer to be confined to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, but to be for *salvation unto all the ends of the earth.* The *favour of the knowledge of Christ* is to be made manifest to all people. The first extraordinary out-pouring of the spirit was upon those who were assembled together from every nation under Heaven, *Parthians, Medians and dwellers in Mesopotamia, Cretes and Arabians.* Christ commanded his disciples, *to go teach all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

What a great command from their master! What a great design in the disciples to readily obey this command! Never was such an order given before! Never did any before undertake so glorious an enterprise! How does this exalt the glory of Christ

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and his Apostles! No Legislator before ever conceived a design to make his laws to be obeyed through all the world. No author of a new religion ever thought of extending his mode of worship to the utmost boundaries of the earth. That cruel scourge of nations, Alexander, was indeed vain enough to form a scheme to conquer the world, but was conquered and slain by intemperance, at thirty years of age. But the glory of the success of this enterprize of the Apostles, was equal to that of the undertaking. They triumphed in Christ in all places. Such was the blessing of God, upon the preaching of the Apostles, that wherever they opened their mouth to preach the gospel, some hearts were open to receive it. *Whosoever they named the name of Christ, men departed from iniquity.* Methinks I see them going out of Judea, like Noah and his family out of the ark to people the new world. God said to Noah, *increase and multiply, and replenish the earth.*

And this was not merely a command, but a word of power which caused them to increase and multiply. So, that word of Christ, *go and evangelize all the nations,* was a fruitful word which caused them to people the earth, and beget in all places children to Jesus Christ. But what shall
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we say of the extent of St. Paul's labours in particular, who says, *that he laboured more abundantly than they all.* He might well say, *that God by him manifested the savour of his knowledge in every place.* His zeal was as great as Alexander's ambition; he wished there were more worlds to conquer, and bring into subjection to the gospel of Christ. Sooner might the earth fail than he want a desire to spread the *savour of the gospel.* He proclaimed the joyful sound from Jerusalem, as far as Ilirecum; he, according to Clement, preached and travelled to the extremities of the western world, as soon as a traveller in haste; he means the two ends of the Roman empire, yet he traverses the world as a labourer doth his field, ploughing up the fallow ground of the barren heart, and sowing the good seed of the word of God; rooting up the thorns and briars of error and sin, then planting the truth, and watering it with tears; building a holy temple for his God, changing savage men into angels of light; raising them from the condition almost of devils to celestial beings. Thus did St. Paul and his colleagues triumph. This made him cry with joy and exultation, *Thanks be to God who makes us to triumph in Christ.*

To conclude. It was no compliment, but the language of his heart, when this Apostle said, *I think myself happy, O king Agrippa, that I am called to speak before thee this day.* With the greatest sincerity I can adopt this language of the Apostle. I think myself happy that I am called to make manifest the knowledge of the truths of the Gospel to this attentive and respectable audience; and, with the same sincerity, I can add with our Apostle, *That it is in my heart to live and die with you.*

Preached at St. Saviour's, Southwark.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ON THE

S U C C E S S

OF THE

G O S P E L.

MAT. xiii. Verse 31, 32.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field:

Which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it.

THE kingdom of heaven, in this place, means the gospel of the kingdom, or the law of Christ. This divine law being written in the heart, reigns, and has

dominion over us, and hereby fits us to reign with God in glory. Hence it is called a kingdom; it establishes a powerful empire in the heart, which is the empire of God, and it makes us meet for that kingdom above, which God has prepared for his children.

Now this kingdom of heaven, this holy gospel, or evangelic law of Christ, he says, *is like to a grain of mustard-seed*. It is so, in two senses.

First, By the smallness of its beginning; *it is the least of all seeds*.

Secondly, By its great increase and progress in the world; *When it is grown it becomes the greatest of all herbs*.

The christian religion, in its origin, was small, and had few to embrace and support it; but, as a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all, as soon as it is sown, takes root, springs up, becomes strong, shoots forth branches, produces leaves, bears fruit, reaches the height of a tree, and becomes the habitation for the souls of the air.* So the gospel first began to be preached in Judea, by a few fishermen; was soon spread among all nations; brought numbers under its dominion; abo-

* So described by a learned Commentator.

lished the worship of heathen Gods, and became the reigning law from *sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*; a law which we profess to have received, in which we profess to place our greatest hopes, and which is the alone rule that we ought to lay down for all our actions and conduct in life.

Power and holiness are ascribed to this law of Christ, this gospel of the kingdom. The Psalmist says, *the law of the Lord is undefiled*, and by a peculiar power attending it, converts and draws the soul to God; *it is perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple*. The power and holiness of the gospel, or evangelic law, is here asserted by the Psalmist; a power which far surpasses nature, and which from the first establishment of this law has gained it the most powerful conquests. It must therefore be a divine power that attends the preaching of the law of Christ, or it could not effect such wonders, in saving souls from death.

Christ's sermon on the mount, is an abridgement of this holy law, and the substance of it. There he explains its extent and meaning; that to be angry without cause is heart-murder, and that the lustful thought is heart-adultery, in the sight of

of God. What then must be that filthy and obscene conversation which so much abounds.

In the further explanation of the holy law, Christ makes them guilty, who swear by the heavens or the earth, much more so must they be who swear by the greatest of names. Hence appears, how holy this law is; and its author could say to his enemies, *which of you convinces me of sin?* Philosophers and human law-givers could make no other objections to this law of Christ, than its being too strict and too holy. Heathen writers have borne testimony in favour of the amazing effects of the gospel on them who heard it. When the plague made dreadful ravages in the Roman army, under the emperor Valerian, the Christians were employed in nursing and comforting their enemies, with as much care as if they had been brethren! No human laws had ever produced such a change in the hearts and conduct of men, which might well astonish every beholder. The reason why the gospel has not now the same effects upon them who hear it, is because it is not heard as the word of God. When we consider how many of the first Christians *have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods*, how many virgins have preferred the jaws of death to the impure embraces
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of impious men; with what noble sentiments they were inspired, and with what fervent devotion they were animated: When we see holiness of life, and deadness to the pleasures of the world prevailing, not only in cloisters, but in camps and courts, all these glorious effects must be ascribed to the power of the gospel; to the seed of God's word being sown in the heart, and watered with the dews of heavenly grace, which grows and increases, like a tree planted by the rivers, and brings forth fruit in abundance; *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.* This law of Christ inspires its subjects with patience, under the most sensible pains, poignant injuries, and greatest adversities; it subdues the risings of revengeful tempers, and checks the sallies of wrath and anger.

What this holy law enjoins, it inspires with resolution to do, without regard to the smiles or frowns of the greatest of men: When Christ, the giver of this evangelic law, after an obscure life of thirty years, began to appear as a public teacher, what mighty things must be accomplished in order to establish his law among men? The world must be formed a new. The most ancient superstitions must be abolished; superstitions on which the people supposed their present and eternal happiness

ness depened, which they preserved as the inheritance of their fathers for which they fought at the hazard of life. In order to establish the gospel in the world, men must be brought to renounce errors, the use of which many ages had authorised, which were supported by the examples of all nations, which favoured the interest of nature; the possession of which could not be troubled without troubling the universe. Such were the superstitions and errors it was necessary to ruin, in order to the reception of the Christian religion.

Such was the fallow-ground, long overgrown with briars and thorns, that was to be broken up; in order to sow this grain of mustard, so that it might grow and *flourish like a cedar in Lebanon*; or, like that tree in Nebuchadnezar's dream, *whose height reached unto heaven, whose branches spread to the ends of the earth, and afford shadow to the beasts of the field, and habitation to the fowls of the air*. But this was not all; much more was necessary for the spreading of the gospel: this law of Christ must be received in the heart; a law that had the appearance of great strictness, a religion, contrary to all the inclinations of the flesh. What a glorious but arduous enterprize was this? What power and fortitude were necessary to accomplish it? The preachers
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of this holy law must be exposed to the fury of the kings of the earth, to the worldly wisdom of statesmen, to the cruelty of tyrants, to the furious zeal of idolaters, and to the mad impiety of Atheists, and the rage of devils ! If our Lord had conversed with the philosophers of that day, upon this plan of making his law to be universally received ; if he had said, in spite of all opposition, my gospel shall be taught by unlettered fishermen ; shall flourish and win its widening way through all the world ; shall make disciples among the household of Cæsar, at Rome, and among the schools of philosophy at Athens, what answer would they have made to this enterprize ? But if Christ had added, that to accomplish all this, he would make use of none of those means, which human wisdom would suggest, for such important designs ; that neither human wealth, nor human eloquence would be employed, but only poor and obscure men, without science, and without support ; would not this scheme be treated as folly and chimera ? Nevertheless, all this Christ actually accomplished by his gospel ; it began at Jerusalem, and from thence, *the joyful sound went forth into all lands* ; the little grain of mustard-seed sprang up, and shot forth branches to the ends of the earth. This has been the admiration of many

many of the great and learned, and is a striking proof of the power and holiness of the gospel. This law of Christ has been established upon principles, in which the reason of man is lost, and must therefore be ascribed to a divine power. Never was any human law established amidst such oppositions and persecutions. Tertulian says, the blood of its subjects was the fruitful seed that made it to flourish and prevail. God has given us a proof of this miracle in that which befel the Hebrew slaves in Egypt; the more they were oppressed in their labours at the brick-kiln, and in slaying the first-born, the more they multiplied and increased: from one family they became a great nation. What an astonishing scene here opens to our sight! We see the world conspired together against Christ and against his law. *The kings of the earth stand and take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed; they cry, let us break the bands of this law asunder, and cast away its cords from us.*

The powers of earth resolve to hew down this spreading tree, and to scatter its branches, and destroy its root; *but he who sits in the heavens laughs at their vain attempts: the Lord has them in derision.* The powers of darkness raises on all sides

mighty

mighty enemies against the preaching of this holy law, and them who obey it. Emperors send forth edicts; magistrates pronounce the most dreadful sentences; the hangmen prepare their scaffolds; and executioners their dungeons, and racks and fires; what then shall tender virgins and children do, who were among the victims devoted to the slaughter? How shall they sustain the furious tempest of these persecutors, and meet death in such dreadful forms! But, sensible of their own weakness, God does all for them; they ran eagerly into the horrid arms of death, rather than deny Christ and his gospel; when the fiery furnace, and racks and tortures were preparing for them, they said, as Hebrew children, *that God whom we serve is able to deliver us.*

Who would have thought but all these executions must have destroyed the gospel tree, root and branch? The same trials of cruel mockings, of bonds and imprisonments, and burnings, were endured by many in this land, under Queen Mary.

The powers of earth and hell seem to be let loose on the professors of the gospel; they are bound and laden with chains; they are shut up in dungeons; they are fixed upon crosses; their joints are stretched upon racks; they are slain by hunger
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and thirst, by the sword and fire; yet that gospel they profess, spreads and increases, makes new conquests every day; passes to the extremities of the earth; is powerful and reigns; is received and revered by some, among all nations; the more its followers are oppressed and persecuted, the more they multiply and increase; more than this, some of the bitterest enemies to this gospel have at last received it; those who most eagerly persecuted the professors of it, have become the most zealous to promote its interests, and defend its truths. Among these persecutors the gospel has gained some of the most barbarous hangmen, tyrants, and crowned heads.

St. Jerome speaks of his rejoicing with a Roman lady, that the Serapis of Egypt was become Christian; that the frozen regions of Sythia burned with the ardours of devotion to Christ, and that the barbarous Hunni sang praises to the God of Israel. But now many professors of christianity are strangers to the fervent devotion, and instead of singing praises to God, blaspheme his name. But were christians of the present day, to have their religion put to the same trials of dungeons and fires, and gibbets, how many would give up their profession, and turn apostates!

How

How many would rather chuse the religion of the pope, or turn Mahometans, than die for professing Christ and his gospel! But whence the cause of this mighty difference; that feeble women, and almost infant christians, could suffer for their religion, what many would now shudder at the thought of? Why, they were christians indeed, but many now have only the name; they had experienced the power of the gospel, but how many are only hearers of it!

Our Church Homilies on the Sacrament, informs us, that the first christians received it every day, and that if any neglected it on Sunday, they were excommunicated, that others might not be hurt by their bad example; they would not suffer any to be called christians who would not obey the law of Christ, and adorn his gospel. It is because the profession of christianity costs us nothing, that there are so many hypocrites in the church: where we subject to the same persecutions and sufferings as the first christians, how few would take that sacred character! but those few would probably be christians indeed; yet Christ himself had one hypocrite among his twelve disciples, and another who through fear denied him.

D 2

Now

Now it is impossible that the eloquence of man could produce such wonderful effects, as for so many to chuse strangling rather than life, for the hope of the gospel; it must have been therefore by that divine power that attended the preaching of it. When the seed of the word was sowing, a divine hand directed it to the good ground, there rooted it, and watered it, till it became a tree, and brought forth fruit to perfection. When the bow of the gospel was drawn at a venture, by the preachers, an invincible hand guided the arrows to the hearts of the hearers, whereby the people fell under its power, and became its willing subjects; this power, attending the true gospel, is sometimes called the *glory of the Lord*, as well as the author of it. Hence the prophet addressed the church thus: *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* Hence, this power of the gospel is called the power of Christ. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Since then this gospel of Christ is the greatest of his mercies, it must call for gratitude from them to whom it is sent: not to receive the gospel in love, not to attend it constantly, not to obey it and be thankful, for it is the basest ingratitude to God, and most injurious to our salvation.

God

God has sent his spirit to reveal the truths of his gospel, and to apply them by his power; he has sent us the light of his law to draw us from the shades of eternal death, and guide us to a blessed life. How great then must be, not only the ingratitude, but the condemnation, of those who continue *to love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

The preceeding considerations afford just cause of astonishment, that the gospel should work such wonderful effects, at first, in the heathen world, yet among many christians, it works no change in heart or life. The gospel of Christ is like himself, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; and he has promised the same power shall attend it; yet many who hear it, continue to live in sin. But the reason is, *it is not mixed with faith in them who hear it*; they have no desire to feel its power and efficacy. Hence it is, that many who are born in heathen darkness, are more moral and decent in their life and conduct than many christians.

Is it not astonishing that the same gospel which has humbled kings, and made them renounce the pomps of the world, should not moderate the pride and ambition of Christians; should not efface from their heart those vain ideas of grandeur and

fortune, which occupy all their thoughts and time, and for which they sacrifice their salvation? Is it not astonishing that the same gospel, which many would hear, at the expence of their lives and fortunes, should now, by many, be disregarded? Is it not surprising that the law of Christ, which has inspired so many of the great and rich to give up their possessions, to have all things common with the poor, should not check that covetousness and love of money which so much prevails? Is it not astonishing, that the gospel which has inspired so many feeble women to rush into the arms of death, should not deliver us from all fear of man, in declaring and professing the truths of the gospel? Is it not wonderful that the same gracious promises, which have supported so many martyrs in wearisome exiles, in rigorous captivities, and the most horrid executions, should not support christians, and make them patient in light adversities? But it is not because the same power is wanting to the gospel, but because the same faith is wanting to them who hear it.

To their faith, which was the faith of God's elect, all things were possible; it follows therefore, that they who do and suffer nothing in the cause of Christ and religion,

gion, have not that faith, their faith is dead because they are dead in sin.

But what will it avail us to be called christians, if we have not the faith and holiness of christians? What advantage to hear that gospel that has so triumphed over the powers of darkness in others, if it do not deliver us from the dominion of pride and lust, and every evil temper? Surely then, all those holy martyrs and virgins who lived in dens and caves of the earth, and were burnt at the stake for their love to the gospel, *must rise in judgment against the neglectors of the gospel of this generation, and condemn them!* This law of Christ has the same power to sanctify and save as ever it had; what it has done for God's people in all ages, it can do for us by support in life, and comfort in death.

Nothing, besides the gospel, can do this; our own righteousness cannot support us under trials and temptations in life, nor afford us comfort in death. The works of the law will be miserable comforters against the darts of the king of terrors, but the faith of the gospel will expel those painful arrows. While you cleave to the law of works for pardon and life, you are under that law which will condemn, but cannot save you; that law must be

be renounced, in order to be saved by the law of liberty, the gospel of peace. But even this will not save us, if it be only heard and not obeyed; the laws and policy of earthly kingdoms, are very different from the law and policy of Christ's kingdom; *my kingdom is not of this world.*

These observations should make us resolve, that since the gospel has been attended with such power in others, we will, from this day, yield to its authority. Let us pray, that when the arrows of God's word are flying abroad, they may be directed by his almighty hand, till the nations are brought in subjection to Christ.

An author, speaking of this law of Christ, makes these holy vows: "My God
" what thy word has made known to me,
" I will perform; I give up myself to the
" directions of thy holy law, let it command, and I will obey; let it intimate
" thy will, and I will accomplish it; let
" it point out the way, and I will walk
" therein; it is true this way to life is a
" narrow and thorny way, but by the
" power of thy gospel, which will guide
" and support me, I shall support all difficulties; the thorns of this life will be
" turned into flowers: at least, when death
" comes, I shall enter into rest. O! were
" the sowing of the divine seed to be harrowed

“rowed in with such purposes, and watered with God's blessing, how would it again flourish as a spreading tree, and *bring forth the fruits of righteousness and peace!*”

I conclude with the sum of this parable from Mr. Burkitt: the gospel is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, not only on account of its small beginnings and rapid progress in the world, but also in the heart of every christian. The grace of faith is small and feeble at its beginning, is afraid of the least reproach of the smallest difficulty; but when it is grown and become strong, it removes mountains of difficulties, and glories in the reproach of Christ. When the divine seed is first sown in the heart, it is a day of small things. A young christian is compared to a bruised reed, that can hardly stand under the slightest blast of adversity and persecution; but strong faith can bear all things, and endure all things.

The Church of Christ, like that vine brought out of Egypt, has taken root in this land, may it flourish to the end of time! His church, is in the text, compared to a great tree, in which the fowls of the air lodge; the people of God have recourse to it for food and rest, for shade, shelter, and protection; such is the mustard

tard seed, when grown up to the fowls of heaven. Yet a little while, and birds of every wing, real christians of every name, will take their happy flight to *that tree of life, in Heaven, where the Lamb will feed them and give them rest; where they will sit and sing the song of redeeming love for ever.*

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

ON

R E M E M B R A N C E

OF THE

C R E A T O R.

ECCLESIASTES, Chap. xii. Verse I.

Remember now, thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

AMONG the offerings God required of the Israelites, *that of the first fruits* was very considerable. There was no ordinance more exactly prescribed, or that extended to so many particular things, as the consecration of the first fruits to God as the Creator; he required his portion of them first, before the people should appropriate any part of them to their own use.

use. A father must offer to God his first-born, otherwise he must redeem him from the hand of the Lord, for five shekels of silver. The master of an inheritance owed to God the first-born of all his cattle; those that were not proper for sacrifices must be redeemed, and the others were sacrificed upon the altar. God also required the first-fruits of trees, newly planted, to be devoted to him.

They were offered the fourth year; the three first years produce being accounted unclean; and the Israelites must not eat of them till the fifth year; they must also yearly devote to the Creator the first-fruits of the corn, and wine, and oil, and all the fruits of the earth; particularly all must be offered without delay, while it was young. *Exod. xxii. Thou shalt not delay to offer of thine abundance.*

As soon as the sun had ripened the ears of barley, they must be offered, the day after the passover, which was the beginning of barley harvest. And at the feast of pentecost the first-fruits of the wheat, in two loaves were offered, made of that which was produced from the newest ears. And at the feast of Tabernacles they presented to the Lord the first part of the wine and oil, of the figs and all the fruits they had gathered. By this, men are taught,

taught, not only that we have all we possess from God, but that he is the cause of the fruitfulness of the earth, for which our thanks are due to him. By this we are also taught that all undertakings should be begun with religion and piety; that the beginning of our life, the beginning of every year, and of every day of our life, should be devoted to God; our soul and body, our thoughts and actions ought not to be employed for our own purposes, till they are first devoted to our Creator, who first made us, and when lost, redeemed us.

Our undertakings in their beginning and progress, and conclusion, should be offered to him, as were the first fruits of the earth, in the ear, in the dough, and in bread; he requires the *first fruits at the passover*, that is the spring of our age and youth. We must devote to him the first-fruits of pentecost, the prime of our manhood and riper years; we must devote to the Lord the first-fruits of the feast of the tabernacles, the autumn of our days; for the winter, which is without fruit, there was no particular feast or offerings of first-fruits. Old age is not in itself fruitful to God; little is done for him, when those evil days of weakness and pain come, *when we can have no pleasure in them.*

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And those who refuse to God their youthful days, if they live to old age, seldom turn from their former ways; they who neglect to plow and sow in spring have little ground to expect any harvest, or any store to keep them from perishing in winter. *To remember our Creator in the days of youth, in the spring of life, is the sure way to keep us from perishing under God's displeasure in old age, when the winter of life draws nigh, in which there is no pleasure.* God hates delays and idleness; he calls for our services to him early in life, and early in the morning; this is what the wise man points out in the text, and to which he exhorts. After having pronounced upon all the pleasures of the world, *vanity of vanities*, he addresses himself particularly to young men; and after telling them, that for all their sinful pleasures, God will surely bring them into judgment; he gives this counsel that they may escape condemnation, *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* And what age stands more in need of such counsel than that of youth, who are ready to say, "Go" and preach to old men, who are near the grave, and leave us to enjoy life; "time enough for us to think of Religion!" Come then, you that are in the vigour of your days, in the morning of life;

life; come and harken to the wisest of kings, who would teach you the way to make your days happy in youth and age; and you who are in the autumn, or winter of life, do you lend an attentive ear; you have been young, and if the remembrance of your youthful days cannot make you joyful, may they make you weep repentant tears. Come and hear what you ought to have done, but left undone, *that God may give you repentance unto life*, and that scripture may be fulfilled in you: *grey hairs are honourable, when found in the ways of righteousness.*

Thus all may be profited: those who are young, in learning *the remembrance of their Creator*, and those who are old, in learning how to repair the evils of youth, by a deep repentance. There are two things to be observed in the text; the duty, and the time, in which it is put in practice. The duty, is the remembrance of our Creator; the time, is particularly in youth, early in life. It is the character of the wicked, that they forget God; and to say a man forgets his Creator, nothing worse can be said of him! for that man is most surely under the wrath of that God, whom he forgets; and David says, *not only the wicked shall be turned into Hell, but all the people that forget God.*

This precept, *remember thy Creator*, supposes three things: first, That we have a Creator; secondly, That we know this; thirdly, That we often forget him. To find this Creator, we need not look far; it is only to consider what he has done, and is still doing for us: the mercy of our preservation, leads us to the Creator, as a river leads us to its source; our life is preserved by means, many of which are unknown; the functions of life are performed without our thought or care. Who gives us life? Who makes the blood to flow in our veins? It is our Creator, the Almighty artificer, preserves the work of his hands. On the supposition of this truth, the wise man calls on us, *to remember our Creator*.

What more, just and reasonable, than to think of him to whom we owe all we have and are? What ingratitude to forget him! He has not made us capable of remembering him, that we should forget him; he has not given us an heart capable of loving him, to leave us at liberty to disregard him! No; our desires of the sovereign good; the infinite capacity of the soul, which nothing finite can satisfy, and the desire of being happy, which prevail in us, are implanted in the heart to lead us to the Creator. As much as we love

life, so much and more should we love him who gave us life. Who is there then that is nearer to you, and to whom you owe so much as to your Creator? If you had no being, you could be capable of no benefit or happiness from relations or friends; if kingdoms were offered you, what would they profit, were your being the next moment to cease! Your existence, your life is therefore a greater benefit than a thousand worlds could be; you must own that you ought to remember the smallest kindness of a friend; how then can you forget this great kindness of your Creator?

To remember, is an action of the mind, which brings back an idea which had escaped it. *To remember our Creator*, supposes that education and religion had before impressed the idea of a Creator. It was in a way of reasoning, that heathen philosophers came to the knowledge of a Creator, without the aid of revelation; by reflections on the order and beauty of the world; upon the connection of causes and effects, and upon the regularity of the motions of the sun, and moon, and stars: all these proclaim the Creator, and more powerfully, than in eloquence of words. They passed from these works to the great artificer; from second causes to the first; from ef-

fects to the principle; and from the desires of the soul to him who can satisfy them.

We may then say to every man, *remember thy Creator*; remember him whom all nature preaches to you, and whom thy conscience sometimes makes thee feel. If thou seek him in thine heart, he is there by the spirit of grace; if thou lookest up to Heaven, he is there, on a throne of grace; if thou lookest to the earth, and all things it contains, his hand made them all; if thou lookest into the abyss of hell, where thousands of fallen angels and wicked spirits are victims of his justice, behold he there in vengeance reigns: every where his impression, the mark of his finger may be seen. Not to think of this Creator, is to be below the beast that perish, which know and remember their master's crib.

Forget not then the lessons which all nature teaches, concerning the Creator, lest heathen philosophers *should rise up in judgment against you.*

Another means of giving us the knowledge of a Creator, is education; and by that, it is done before our mind is capable of reasoning upon the wonders of the Creator. The pious parent teaches the lisping tongue of his children to pronounce the name of God, (not as we hear most of the children

children in our streets, in oaths and curses) but in pious prayers: the deportment, as well as words of pious parents, tend to make their children comprehend, that there is a God, who is just and good, whom they must fear and love: These lessons are enlarged with age, and the first instructions of our catechism, teaches us that God has placed us in the world to serve and glorify him; but how many children are suffered to play on a Sabbath-day, instead of teaching them at home, *to remember their Creator*, to remember to keep his Sabbath holy; a sad sign that such parents do not remember him themselves. But as it is said to the young man, in preceding chapter, so it may be said to such parents, that for all these neglects in teaching their children to remember their Creator, *God will bring them into judgment*. But to the youth of pious parents, we may say, remember that God to whom you were solemnly consecrated in infancy, whom you were taught to fear before you knew him, or your infant tongue could lisp his name: this is the end for which your Creator sent you into the world.

Another means to know and remember our Creator, is reading and hearing God's word, and attendance on his holy sacraments; but what a shame and reproach is it, that

that after all these lessons of nature and religion, so many live in forgetfulness of God! How many, who have some remembrance of God, yet glorify him not as God. It is not enough to remember there is a God, unless we diligently seek him as our portion and reward. It has been observed that this precept in the text, supposes that God is often forgotten: the remembrance that there is a God may not be totally erased from the mind; but to forget him, in the sense of scripture, is not to think of him frequently, and with love and affection. Not to take pleasure in frequent reflections on our Creator, is to forget and neglect him: on the contrary, to remember him, is to think of him often with delight and care, to walk in his good ways. A bad memory in things of the world is often matter of complaint, but a bad memory, with regard to God and his commands, is very dangerous, and often fatal.

It is not only the atheist, who forgets his Creator, *who is that fool that says in his heart there is no God*; not only the epicurean, who denies his providence, and says, that he takes no account of human affairs, but all who wilfully sin against him. They forget that he is in all places, when they dare to sin before his face; they forget his justice, when they do not fear

to offend him, notwithstanding his dreadful threatenings; they forget his goodness, when they repay him with ingratitude. In order to stay the violence of the sinful passions of youth, and to suppress their vices, this only is necessary to have always a remembrance of the presence of your Creator. Hence it is, that God's word so frequently calls on us to remember him. Hence, God has appointed in his church feasts, and memorials, and sacraments, as means, that he has wisely ordained to keep us in remembrance of himself and his goodness. But observe, by this remembrance of the Creator, is not meant a speculative remembrance, but a practical; a remembrance which leads us to know, to love and obey him; and to a careful observance of all the duties of religion. Physicians have observed, that when a wound in the head has taken away the memory, life is in great danger; it is the same, with regard to the life of religion, as that of nature: when our Creator is often forgot, when the wounds of sin are so deep in the soul, as to forget our benefactor, and his benefits, then the eternal life of the soul is in the greatest danger.

Hence, the necessity of often repeating this precept, *remember thy Creator*; but particularly

particularly to young persons, remember him *in the days of thy youth*. Youth is an age when many forget their Creator, because they think death is afar off. When youth look into the world, they see it on the fairest side; a thousand objects present themselves, which surprise them, flatter and enchant them; all these objects, which strike the mind, and deeply impress it through the windows of the senses, so occupy and distract it, as often to shut out the remembrance of God. At this age, they are all eye and all ear to sensible things, but are blind and deaf to the things of God and heaven: they hear not the voice of God, saying in his word, *remember thy Creator*: they see neither heaven nor hell, and they think themselves too far from old age, to believe it necessary, to be concerned about them.

Youth will not believe, that time is short, and eternity at hand, much less will they be persuaded, that time is given them to be well improved, to obtain an eternal happiness: they think their time is their own, to do their own will, and seek their own pleasure. A sanguine constitution pushes them on with violence. The imagination is lively; their blood runs rapidly in their veins; all the motions of
their

their spirit are impetuous, and their passions strong. Pleasures are tasted with the greatest sensibility; they are pursued with a hunger and thirst that cannot be satisfied; they only seek for company of their own age, who, in their conversation, manners, and example, tend only to excite the gratifications of their passions, and lead them farther from God: the books they read, have the same tendency; novels and romances are preferred to the oracles of God, and books of religion. The world has its authors to defend its maxims, and in most companies some are heard to utter those things that tend to corrupt the heart and life. How ready is the ear of youth to listen to such conversation! No wonder their Creator is forgotten. It is highly necessary then, that the ministers of religion should endeavour to stem this torrent of impiety and ungodliness, by frequently repeating this precept, *remember thy Creator*. It is for their own good, that God would have young people remember him, to save them from that inevitable shipwreck, which generally attends youth, when left to themselves. When a man desires to be remembered by another, he generally has some interest in it; but our remembrance of the Creator cannot

cannot profit him, nor add to his happiness.

In this book the wise man exhorts youth to remember that their Creator will be their judge; as creation began the actions of God towards man, as to the present world, so judgment will finish them.

Hence he says, *rejoice, O young man, in the days of thy youth, and walk after the sight of thine eyes, and the inclinations of thine heart*: (we may understand it as a declaration of what is the usual practice of youth) and therefore he adds this awful BUT, *know that for all these things*; (for all your jollity, and forgetfulness of your Creator) *God will bring you into judgment*. To call youth to the remembrance of God, is to call the prodigal son home to the father's house. It is the creature after which the prodigal wanders; those creatures that are pronounced vanity, and are compared to *the husks that are eaten by the swine*, which cannot satisfy man's hungry appetite for happiness. Many a promising youth has ended his short life at a gallows for seeking happiness in the creature, and forgetting the Creator.* It is therefore

* When Absolom had so far forgot his Creator, as to rebel against his father, and to seek his life, we soon hear of his hanging in an oak.

to turn youth from the broad path to hell, into the narrow path to heaven, that Solomon cries, *remember thy Creator*; to call them from fading beauties and false pleasures, to those at God's right hand, that can never fade away.

This precept includes the whole of religion. To remember our Creator is to place him always before us; it is to have regard to him, in all our actions, and to walk diligently in all his commandments and ordinances. He who rightly remembers his Creator, will fear him, because he is Almighty; will love him, because he is good; will honour and serve him, because it is his due. He who properly remembers his Creator, will remember his laws to obey them; his threatenings to fear them; his promises to believe and embrace them; and his benefits, to thank him for them. He will remember too, that very shortly, this Creator will reward, with an eternity of happiness or misery, all mankind, according to their works.

Thus you have heard what is implied in this duty of remembering our Creator; and that young persons are particularly exhorted to this duty. This, I purpose to insist upon more largely, at another opportunity. I therefore conclude, with

F

commending

commending you to God, and the word, of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance in his kingdom.

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

REMEMBRANCE

OF THE

C R E A T O R.

ECCLESIASTES, Chap. xii. Verse 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of
thy youth.*

WITH this chapter, the wise and penitent Solomon closes his sermon on the vanities of life; in which are some weighty exhortations, likely to make a deep impression on the hearts of all, especially of youth. They are counselled to an early devotion, from arguments taken from the calamities of old age, and the great change that death will make.

In my first discourse, on this subject, you heard what is implied in this duty, of

remembering our Creator. your serious and candid attention is now entreated, while it is considered, that this duty, is in a more particular manner required of youth.

In the preceeding chapter, verse 8. *If a man lives many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.* But where are they to be found, who *live many years and rejoice in them all*? This is only a supposition, not a case in fact. The most prosperous state has its allays, and the most chearful spirit has its damps: jovial sinners have their melancholy qualms, and chearful saints have their gracious sorrows. But supposing the sinner's day of youth should be unclouded, and its joy uninterrupted, yet a winter's night of age, or death, must follow; the days of darkness shall be many; the days of lying in a bed of death, or a bed of dust, where the body will lie in the dark, where the eye seeth not, and the sun shineth not. The grave is a land of darkness, and there our days will be many: the days of our lying under ground will be more than the days of our living above ground. Though a man's years upon earth may be three score and ten, his years under the earth, may be three score hundred and ten: but as the longest day will

will have its night, so the longest night will have its morning. Though these days of darkness be many, they are all numbered, and will be finished at the morning of the resurrection. It would be salutary for youth, in their morning of life, to remember that those days of darkness will surely come, and that they will be many more in number than their days of light and mirth.

Many other reasons may be assigned, why we are exhorted particularly, to devote the flower of our age to God. The difficult and important work of our sanctification and meetness for Heaven, should engage us in it early in life. They who think it a trifling easy matter to be prepared for the kingdom of Heaven, know not what is implied in that preparation. In the science of salvation, we may say with justice, what has been said of medicine: the art is long, and life is short. The whole of man's age is short enough for the task assigned him, of being prepared to meet his God. That virtue which gives meetness for Heaven does not, like Jonah's gourd, spring up in a night. It is a delicate plant, grows and strengthens by degrees: it wants time and much care. The guilt of sin will not be removed by a sigh, nor the kingdom of Heaven be taken

in a moment: nor will a few faint wishes change the sinful heart. We are subject to the power of those unclean spirits, which are not cast out, but by fasting and prayer: and though the power of divine grace is Almighty, yet so inveterate are our spiritual diseases, as to refuse to be healed but by time: in some diseases you know time is the best physician. Is not youth then the best age to conquer sinful inclinations, and oppose irregular passions? Though you are young, you have a long and narrow, and thorny way to go: if you stay till towards the end of the day, and setting of the sun, night may surprize you, and prevent you from ever arriving at your wished-for home. One who died young, cried out, "O for a month, or a week longer!" but confessed, "an age was too short for the work he had to do." Hence David says, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* If it be objected, that what is called the golden age of man, is little proper to religion and piety; that youth is flighty, inconstant and fickle; that devotion requires a more tranquil and settled age; that spring is only proper for flowers, and autumn for fruits; that sports and pleasures are the portion of youth, and wisdom

dom of old age : that there is a time and season for all things.

To such objections we may oppose this precept of Solomon, and other passages in scripture, which counsel youth as well as age. Jeremiah's Lamentations. *It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.* He that bears the yoke of Christ in his youth, will find it pleasant and good in his old age.* We may also bring the examples of the saints, in all ages who have chosen to serve and remember their Creator in youth. David tells us, *that out of the mouth of babes, God has ordained strength and praise.*

Why should children be consecrated to God, in infancy? Why do sponsors and parents engage to teach them the commandments, and to bring them to hear sermons, if it be not to *remember their Creator in youth*? Why are parents commanded to teach their children the holy scriptures, and to *talk of them when sitting in the house, and walking by the way*, if not

* The Lord Bishop of Chester, in his excellent sermon, on this subject, preached lately at the Asylum, made this remark: That religion's ways are ways of pleasantness; but they are so in old age, to them chiefly who had remembered their Creator in the days of their youth.

to put them in practice, when grown up? Why, all these pains, if they are to be left to prostitute their youthful days to the world and sin? Every age has its hindrances, and its helps to piety and devotion. Youth and old age have their particular temptations, and difficulties to surmount; but our youthful days are most favourable to religion; then the soul is tender, and susceptible of pious impressions; then the mind is inflexible, the heart has not contracted obduracy by time and evil habits. Why then should not a youth be turned early to that object to which he must one day be turned, or be turned into Hell. Most youth have principles of fear and modesty, which may be improved to the advantage of early piety; but granting that youth are beset with a thousand snares and temptations: on this very account they should *remember their Creator*. An unbroken horse has need of the greatest care, and the strongest bridle: it is in a furious tempest there is the greatest necessity of a good pilot. To what may we compare a youth, who is abandoned to the inclinations of his own heart? He is like a ship without sails, without a pilot, and without a helm; tossed by a dreadful tempest in a dark night, ready to strike against a rock, and every

every moment liable to sink into the great abyss. Such is the danger of a youth, when the yoke of religion is shaken off, and he is under the power and guidance of his passions. And are there not some such, who hear me to-day? Stop then, and look into that infernal abyss of divine vengeance, over which you hang but by a brittle thread! If the remembrance of the Creator does not restrain you, the consequence will be, you will go on, *like the ox to the slaughter, or the fool to the correction of the stocks.* Besides, our first years are mostly a guide to our last years. A libertine in youth, is generally the same in age; his desires and conversation is the same, even perhaps, when he has lost the power to act. Many form good purposes with regard to a future day, but while their religion is only in idea, and their attachment to the world is real, they are surprised by death, which drags them to the bar of that God whom they have forgotten.

Many who have passed the meridian of life, and own it is time to think of God and Heaven, yet live the same. With what chains and fetters are they held down to things of time and sense! All their old habits plead for continuance, and seem to ask, if they must at last be forsaken? The imagination

imagination and constitution have acquired motions and impressions, which refuse to be conquered. Sinners, are like a tree that has taken deep root in the earth, which cannot be plucked up by the hand as once it might, when a young plant: much more labour with the ax and mattock is then necessary to root it up.

It is a good beginning that makes a happy end. An abandoned youth, if he lives to old age, is generally decrid and despised; but what is more honourable and happy than old age, after piety and religion in youth? When the spring of youth has been plenteous in flowers and blossoms, the autumn and winter of age will abound in fruit. When youth has been active, *in running the race set before us*, age will, with joy, reach the goal, and obtain the prize: when youth has been vigorous in *warring the good warfare*, age will compleat the victory. How happy and peaceable will old age be, when free from the reproaches and remorse of an ill-spent youth! In order then to escape the bitterness of a late uncertain repentance, *remember thy Creator in thy youth.*

You have heard that the sacrifices under the law, must be offered young, in order to be acceptable to God. The services and sacrifices of youth, are most pleasing

pleasing to the Creator; the free-will offerings of our early years, will bring most glory to him; when days of strength and health, and beauty, are devoted to the Creator, *this is a sacrifice well-pleasing in his sight*, that is sure to meet with tokens of his acceptance, as did the sacrifice of Abel. But God expressed his hatred of victims offered that were lame and old. They who live in forgetfulness, and neglect of God, and his ways, till *the evil days of age* come on them, have no assurance of finding acceptance with him. God would not accept the sacrifice of an unclean beast upon his altar.

What can old age have to offer to the Lord, but a soul, long defiled and polluted by sin, and a body sinking under the weight of many years of guilt? How can a sinner, with any comfort or confidence, offer to God the sacrifice of his last days, in which he can no longer serve himself, nor the world. What can he then expect, but to be sent to those masters whom he chose to serve in his youth? To hear his Creator bid him go to the world and his companions in sin, and try what comfort they can now afford him! But all these will prove but miserable comforters, when Death stares him in the face, and points him to hell, as the just reward of sin.

Then

Then he may say, *O Death! how bitter is the thought of thee*, to an old man that has spent his youthful days in sin, and forgetfulness of God!

Let those then, who are young, begin to consecrate the flower of youth to their Creator. All that you possess of strength, or wit, or beauty, you owe to him: remember youth has the wings of an eagle, its flight is rapid; it is a flower that must soon tarnish, "born just to bloom and fade." What can be more wise or happy for you, than to consecrate this fading flower to the Creator, who will then crown you with never fading youth and beauty, in the realms of immortality. We learn from Isaiah's prophecy, that the prince of darkness chuses also for sacrifices those who are young. So far did he blind the minds even of some among the Israelites, that they made their first-born, when young, *to pass through the fire to Moloch*.

They live so long among the Heathen, that they learned their works; the most sinful and cruel of their works was, *to offer their sons and daughters unto devils*. And satan still gains too many such victims, though in another manner; many young persons fall victims to the vanity and pride of parents, who do not teach them, *to*
remember

remember their Creator; who, on this account, like Job, have called for imprecations on their father and mother, and cursed the day of their birth. But supposing our youthful days should be devoted to God, what sacrifice is made for him? You renounce the sinful pleasures of that world, which you must soon leave, at the call of death: you give up those things which bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

But how great the advantages of an early devotedness to God! It surely will have great reward; a more shining crown of life, *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* To renounce the world, while it smiles upon you; whilst it courts your affections and regard; to fly to the arms of divine mercy, when the world is embracing you, this is acceptable with God.

The advice given in the 5th chapter, is necessary, in order to a right remembrance of the Creator. Verse 1. *Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not, that they do evil. Keep thy foot when thou goest, not keep it back from the house of God, nor*

go with reluctance, but look well to your goings. Keep your thoughts from wandering; and your eyes from roving, while engaged in God's worship. To draw nigh to God with the lips, when the heart is far from him, is to offer the sacrifice of fools; i. e. of the wicked. They suppose, by coming to God's house, they are doing God service: but they consider not, that even in this they do evil, for *their prayer is turned into sin.*

A Commentator call this chapter, the Application of the Royal Preacher's Sermon, on the Vanity of the World. Youth flatter themselves with great expectation from it, but Solomon had tried it to his cost and disappointment. He therefore exhorts youth to guard against the mischiefs and sorrow he had found, by remembering their Creator. This chapter is also called, the Royal Physician's Antidote against those Diseases of youth, *love of mirth, and indulgence of sinful pleasures.* The only cure for these diseases, *is remembrance of the Creator.*

The reason to enforce this command on youth, is in the latter part of the text, *before the evil days come;* of sickness, age, and death. These days are terrible days to nature; evil days indeed to them, who have

have forgot their Creator. These evil days will come, sooner or later. Days of labour and sorrow, when there can be no pleasure in them, except it be from a comfortable prospect beyond the grave. These evil days are elegantly described in this chapter, in figurative expressions. Verse 2. *While the sun, or moon, and stars be not darkened.* To old age, their light is dim; their brightness clouded. Light is sometimes put for comfort: old age has often no comfort or pleasure in the converse of the Day, or repose of the night. Thus, *the sun, and moon, and stars are darkened to them.*

Verse. 3. *The keepers of the house shall tremble;* i. e. the head and arms begin to shake, and can no longer preserve and defend this house of clay, which is ready to fall into the grave. *The strong men shall bow themselves;* i. e. the legs which used to support the body, and bear its weight, bend under them. *The grinders cease, because they are few;* i. e. the teeth, by which our meat is ground, cease to do their office, because they are decayed and gone. *And those that look out of the windows are darkened.* The eyes wax dim like Isaac's, when he could not discern his son Jacob.

The light of the eye often goes before the light of life.

Verse 4. *The doors shall be shut in the street.* Old age is often confined at home, has no disposition to visit, or be visited. *He shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and the daughters of the music shall be brought low.* Their rest is disturbed at the chirping or singing of early birds; and hence, they will awake and arise, at the crowing of the cock, and have no longer ear or voice for singing.

Verse 5. *The almon-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper be a burden.* Age will whiten the hair, like an almond-tree in blossom, every little thing then becomes burthenfome to the mind or body, though light as the grasshopper.

Verse 6. *The silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken.* The silver cord, by which the soul and body were fastened together; and the bowl that preserved the waters of animal life, will hold them no longer. *Then man goeth to his long home; the body to the dust, and the spirit to God that gave it,* by whom it will be judged. This must, ere long, be the end of young and old. God grant that we may be prepared for these evil days!

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I know no motives more powerful to urge upon youth, to remember their Creator.

I shall therefore conclude, with an address to them, who are just entering on these evil days, but have forgotten their Creator in youth. What an unspeakable loss have you sustained, in losing your best days, with regard to a better World ! It is in one sense, an irrecoverable loss.

But although those days cannot be recalled, may you now begin to lament the loss of them you have spent to little purpose, or to bad purposes. Old age finds sin in the heart, like an old insolent domestic, that refuses to be turned out of the house ; or rather like a tyrant, that will reign, and whose language is like that of Pharaoh ; when he refused to let Israel go to serve the Lord.

When sin has been served to old age, it will not easily let the sinner go, that he may serve the Lord. But happy they, who in youth, remember God ; who are not forgetful hearers of his word ; who remember his commandments to do them. They shall be had in everlasting remembrance with God ; he will think of them for good in age and death. He will remember

member his promise at the last day, in bringing them up out of the grave to the possession of that good land, that eternal kingdom, *that he has prepared for them, from the foundation of the world.*

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

ON OUR

MISTICAL UNION

WITH

C H R I S T.

2 Cor. Chap. v. Verse 17.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

IF we look upon the face of nature, and consider how lately she was in her wintry state, we may say, *old things are passed away, and all things become new.* Instead of being covered with snow, she is covered with flowers and verdure. And how pleasing is this change in nature! But more happy is that moral change spoken of in the text: Mankind are very fond of change, and of new things. There is, perhaps,

haps, no inclination that is more natural to us. They who can produce something new, are almost sure to please; and without novelty, even pleasures become insipid, and riches wearisome. The most delicious deinties are no more relished; honours, praises, glory, crowns, and kingdoms, in the end, are no more pleasing: music, spectacles, sports, and feasts; in short, every thing that is most enchanting to the senses, loses some degree of regard, when become familiar, and it can no more be said, *this is new*.

It is for this reason, we regard the most excellent works of God, without admiration, because we see them every day. The heavens, which are spread around us, like a rich curtain, painted with so many colours, and adorned with so many figures: that bespangled canopy, that covers so superbly our heads, and which, at first, so agreeably surprises our eyes, hardly excite our notice, because no longer new.

The sun, with the brightness of its rays, the rapidity of its course, and all its wonderful effects, is no more than a common object, because it is seen every day. It is nearly the same with the objects of the mind, as with the objects of the senses. Our sciences, our discoveries, our books, and the truths of scripture, are apt to be
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less agreeable, as they are less new to us ; but what is more strange, we are weary of ourselves, of our life, and of our time, if there be no diversity or change. Some, though united in the firmest bonds, can no longer please, nor bear the sight of each other, only for this reason, because they always are the same, and must appear in the same form. They change in apparel and customs, manners and employments, their dwellings and their country ; but all this cannot change their persons and tempers. In their figure and beauty, there is nothing new, but they grow older every day, and consequently less admired. For this reason, many are afraid of growing old, yet at the same time, kill many of their fleeting hours, and wish for new days and years. It must be confessed, there is much oddity and caprice, in this perpetual desire of change, and of new things, yet there is something natural, and some will say necessary. The imperfection of our senses and imagination; the inquietude of the human heart; the vast extent of our desires; the nature of the soul, which seeks the sovereign good, but cannot find it in the creature: this is the real source of this love of change and novelty. Since we are not in a happy and perfect state, it is natural, and in a sense just,

just, that we should love change, and seek for that which we do not possess. But let us turn this inclination the right way; let us make a good use of this panchant, which is generally excessive, ungovernable, and hurtful, when it inclines us to seek novelty, in the objects of sense, and in the things of the world. Let us, with all haste, seek for a change, and for new things: Do you ask in what? Why, it ought to be in our ways, our morals, and habits.

By the power of the gospel all things may become new. The Grace of God promises a thousand new benefits, to which we are yet strangers, or that we do not perfectly know; and glory reserves for the faithful thousands more. Ah, if novelty is capable of exciting your desires, you may find it in the favour of God; by walking in his ways, and in the enjoyment of his blessings. Here you may be brought into a new covenant, become a new creature, and return to new days of beauty and youth. The gospel directs you to find the new Jerusalem, whose streets are paved with gold, *those new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

If you become what the text speaks of, *a new man, a new creature*, all these things will

will be your own. You will possess new pleasures, and new benefits, and which will be always new in the kingdom of God. If it be your perpetual aim, and design in your religious duties, to be renewed day by day, in the divine image, you will find within you a perpetual source of new joys and hopes, which will *spring up unto everlasting life*. This is the change; this is the new life, the new creature of which the text speaks. I cannot wish you any thing better than this change; I cannot propose to you any thing, more advantageous, or more necessary for you. Happy for you, if obeying the calls of the gospel, *you shall put off the old man with his deeds*, and become *new creatures*, by a new heart, and a new life!

Every thing in the text is new; the terms and the thing itself. These terms, to be in Christ, and to be a new creature, are not the usual language of mankind; it is the language of Canaan, and the stile of holy scripture.

In the world, it is common to say, a man belongs to such a person, to show the union or dependance he has to his parent or master. But neither the disciples of philosophers, or the followers of any religion, or the servants of princes, are said to be in their master. The thing also
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is new. The union that real christians have with Christ, is very different from ordinary ties and relations among men. That new birth, or regeneration, which the scriptures explain, by the new creature, is also a change unknown to most men. Therefore to new mysteries, it is necessary to have new expressions, and to have new words to new ideas. To be in Christ then, is to be a real christian; to be in the church of Christ, by the profession of his doctrine, and to be in communion with him by the spirit of grace; it is to live in the true faith of Christ; it is to be in him, as one's principal, and to be united to him by a quickening and saving union. This expression is sometimes rather general, as when the apostle speaks of the churches of Judea, which were in Christ, that is, christian churches; and the apostle, in the greatest part of his epistles, salutes the saints in Christ Jesus; and he salutes his kinsmen which were in Christ before him, meaning, they had been called by divine truth before him. In this sense, to be in Christ, is opposed to being under the law, and being out of Christ. To be in Moses and the law, is to be in the synagogue of the Jews, and of the religion of the Jews. To be in Christ, is to have left the synagogue, and to follow the laws of Christ.

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to be out of Christ, is to be in the state of heathens, and all who have no part in the covenant of grace, and the blessings of the gospel.

But to be in Christ, in the sense of the text, is more than to profess the christian religion. It implies, to be a christian in reality, as well as in name; to be in him by spiritual quickening, and mystical union. To rightly comprehend it, let us compare this expression with others that may clear it up. For example, we say, that members are in a body, to signify they are part of it, that they are moved and animated by the same spirit. And it is thus that real christians are in Christ; they are all so united to him, as to make *one and the same mystical body with him*. Hence they are called, *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone*. They live by the same life, and are animated by the same spirit, which proceeds from the Saviour.

The branches which are united to the stock, do not more live in the tree, than believers live in Christ, from whom they receive the life of grace; and from whom they receive sap and nourishment, by the participation of his spirit.

By nature, we are all in Adam; *for in Adam we all died*: he is the root of mankind, from whom we derived our origin,

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that father who carried us all in his loins. We were in him, when God placed him in the Garden of Eden, and entered into covenant with him for himself and his posterity. We were in him, when he sinned; he represented all of us; and when he became subject to death by sin, we fell under the same subjection. It was thus, *that in Adam all died*. It was from him, we derived what St. Paul calls the old man, and became liable to condemnation. But by divine grace, true christians are no longer considered in Adam, but in Christ as their representative, and living head. As they died in the first Adam, so they are quickened and made alive by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

They are in him, as the source of their new being, and the author of their new life; a happy participation of nature, very different from the former; a happy union with the redeemer, by which *we become one with him, and he with us: we dwell with him, and he in us*. These are reciprocal, one supposes the other, and in which there are mutual acts. On our part it is by faith, love, and obedience, we are united to him. Hence, St. Paul says, *I live by the faith of the son of God*. On the part of Christ this union is made, by his love to us, and by his spirit dwelling in us;

us; by which, *we become one spirit with him.* O how great are the wonders of grace! See the happy exchange our Redeemer has made with us! He has taken our nature by his incarnation, and he makes his people partakers of his own, by regeneration!

Our nature became the tabernacle of the divinity; hence, one of the names of Christ is *Immanuel, God with us.* And by being born from above, we become *the habitation of God, through the spirit.* Hereby we are raised to the dignity of children of God, and heirs of heaven. It is not in this sense, that the apostle speaks of all mankind being in God, when he says, *that in him, we live, and move, and have our being.* This means that his power and influence are absolutely necessary, to the existence of all. If these were to be withdrawn for a moment, our life must end. *If he hide his face, man is troubled, and returns again to his dust.* In this sense, therefore, all creatures are in God; live and move in him. But they who are in Christ have spiritual life and motion from him; and it is by this union with him, the new man is formed, or the new creature is created. This phrase of being a new creature in Christ, is a figurative expression. We are told that a master in

Israel, a teacher of God's word, asked our Lord, *How can these things be? How can a man be born anew? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb?* Well might Christ answer this question with another. *Art thou a master in Israel? Art thou appointed to teach men the way to heaven, and know it not thyself?*

But this change, which divine grace produces, is not a natural, but a moral change; it is a renovation of the qualities and habits of the mind. When Christ turned the water into wine, and when the rod of Moses became a serpent, this was a change in nature; but when a sinner becomes holy, when the debauchee becomes sober and temperate, then the state and moral habits of the soul are changed; all its purposes and inclinations.

Some have imagined, that in conversion, or becoming a new creature, there would be a change in the body, like that of Naaman, when healed of his leprosy. But scripture expressions are not to be wrested beyond their intention. When they speak of the new man, and the new creature, they mean a change of heart and life; a supernatural change, produced by a principle of divine grace. It does not mean a change of the outward form, or a destruction of the powers and faculties of the mind.

Here

Here there is nothing to fear; men need not say to Christ, as the devils did, *art thou come to destroy us before the time?* He came only *to destroy the works of the devil*. In giving a new nature, he takes away nothing good from the first. Our Redeemer came to repair the ruins of the soul, to re-build, and purify this temple of the divinity, which sin had profaned; to give us more elevated and more holy desires and affections. In short, to produce such a happy change, which so far from hurting our nature, exalts and ennobles it. A change which the bible sometimes calls a Resurrection, a new creation, sometimes, a new birth, or sanctification. This expression, a new creature, was not unknown to the Jews. Profelites to their religion, they called new men, and new born; after their children had studied five years the books of Moses, and three more in the mysteries of the law, they said they were become new creatures. And St. Paul would here have us understand, that the real christian deserves this title, better than the Profelites of the Synagogue, and the children brought up in the schools of the Pharisees.

That great mystery of godliness, which is taught by the disciples of Christ, hath much more of the new and marvellous,

than all the lessons of the Jewish rabbies. The eyes of the understanding are enlightened by his spirit; the thoughts of the heart are cleansed, and the will renewed by the power of his grace. This term of being a new creature, is opposed to man's first estate in Paradise, as well as to his state after the fall. Indeed, when man came first out of his Creator's hand, he was a new and most excellent creature; his outward form was the most beautiful of all that God had created; his body newly formed from the earth, free from pain and disease, was at first a noble palace of an innocent soul. This innocent soul bore the impression of those divine hands that formed it; God looked on this composition, which he had produced, and he approved the works of his hands. The devil was envious of man's beauty and happiness, and endeavoured to ruin this glorious structure. He but too well succeeded: the happy state of man endured but a little time; his golden age was short, almost as a watch in the night; being in honour, he did not abide therein, and became the worms inferior. But the text speaks of a new work, coming out of the hands of God, far more durable than the first. Behold our Almighty Redeemer comes to form out of our ruins a new man. He gives him
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him the piercing eye of faith, to discover divine mysteries; he gives him the hearing ear, attentive to the voice and word of God; he gives him a taste for heavenly things, noble sentiments, and holy affections; he gives him immutability and immortality. The first man was made a living soul; the new man is quickened in spirit, renewed in the image of his Creator.

The first man was subject to change to death, and an irrecoverable fall; but the new man, being *begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word of God abides for ever*. This new creature is as immortal as the angels. God will not lose what has cost him so dear, he has made it to endure for ever; all things are transient and fading; riches, honours, cities, kings, and empires, and the world itself. There are some graces of the spirit which will cease and be no more, as Patience, Faith and Hope. But the new creature will remain: it is a work done for eternity. The real christian is also called by this name, in opposition to the state of sin, or what St. Paul calls the old man. When satan triumphed over man, he changed him into his own likeness. He produced a body of sin made up of criminal desires, and passions; and the soul of this body was pride, and sinful self-love. But Christ, who came

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to destroy sin and death, will have us *cru-
cify this old man, with his deeds, and the new
man to be formed in us*; that we should no
longer bear the image of the earthly Adam,
but of the heavenly. This is the change
that must pass upon all who enter into life,
because *flesh and blood cannot enter the king-
dom of heaven*. It is therefore a matter of
infinite concern to each of us, to consider if
we are the subjects of such a change. God
cannot deny himself, nor alter the word
that is gone out of his mouth. He has
confirmed it by an oath, that none but
those who become new creatures shall
enter the new Jerusalem; shall be inha-
bitants of that new heaven and earth,
wherein only the righteous dwell. In Re-
velations, it is said, *None shall enter the
holy city that worketh abomination, or mak-
eth a lie; but they whose names are in the
book of life*. But it is certain that all who
experience this divine change, have their
names written in heaven.

That we may be so changed, is the end
for which the means of grace are appointed.
If we then rest short of it, the end of our
coming to church, and sacrament, is not
answered. If in all our prayers, and hear-
ing God's word, we do not pray to be
changed, by the spirit of the Lord, into
the divine image, all will be in vain.

You.

You, who have never been purged from the old sins, must be strangers to this change. To all of this character, that saying of Christ applies, *If you die in your sins, where I am ye cannot come.* But those, who through grace, are walking in newness of life; who have new purposes, and desires, and have stedfastly set their face towards the new Jerusalem; yet, a little while, and Christ will call them to these blissful realms, where all will be new and glorious for ever.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

ON

G O D ' s D E P A R T U R E

FROM

S A M S O N .

Preached at the MAGDALEN CHAPEL, *London*, on *Sunday*, the 15th of *June*, 1777,

When Dr. DODD, late preacher there, was under
Sentence of Death.

(THE THIRD EDITION.)

JUDGES xvi. 20.

*He knew not that the Lord was departed from
him.*

WHO that reads can but be struck
with grief and wonder at what this
chapter relates ! Samson, a judge in Israel,
is the subject of it. In his character met
the

the greatest strength and the greatest weakness: strength of body but weakness of mind. Bishop Hall says, "I know not which most excites my admiration, his strength or his weakness." As a proof of his weakness, we need only read from verse 17, to the text. After Delilah had, by his telling her three lies, given him as many evident proofs, that she should deliver him into the hands of those that sought his life:—*Then he told her all his heart, and said unto her, there hath not been a razor upon my head: for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the Lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once; for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the Lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hands. And she made him sleep upon her knees: and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. (But he was sadly mistaken! the chains of*
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sin are not so easily broken and shaken off, as the new ropes.) *And he knew not that the Lord was departed from him.*

When we consider what Samson once was; a Nazarite to God; the wonder and delight of his parents, judging Israel in righteousness, and conquering their enemies with his own hand. After seeing him in all his glory, to find him, as the 21st. verse informs us, "in the hands of his enemies, with his eyes put out, and grinding in prison with slaves." *O how are the mighty fallen!* How is the glory and defence of Israel become the scorn and triumph of the Philistines! *When told in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon, how do the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice!* The nature of Samson's punishment was suitable to the nature of his sin. He did not resolve with Job, *to make a covenant with his eyes.* By them he is first betrayed to sin, and now they are first pulled out. At Gaza he is first captivated by his sinful lusts; no where is brought thither a wretched captive. The people of Gaza once saw him with astonishment, at midnight, bearing away the gates of their city. Now they see him in his own darkness, struggling in chains. All this was the sad consequence of his departure from his God. Once the Lord's presence was his strength, his

his shield, his glory, his heaven. Now his absence is his misery, his shame, his reproach, his hell. By sad experience he might adopt the poet's language,

" Tell him his presence makes my heaven. And

" tell,

" O tell him that his absence is my hell."

Mrs. ROWE.

But was it not better for Samson to be blind in prison, than to abuse his eyes with an harlot? * Was he not a greater slave, when gratifying his passions, than when grinding in the prison house? Was he not more blind, when he saw licentiously, than in his present blindness? For till they put out his eyes, he saw not the nature of his crime. Now the *sighing of this prisoner came up before the Lord*. Like penitent Manassah, when blind, and bound in misery and iron, he cries for mercy. His prayer is heard. His tears are wiped away. His request is granted. His hair grew with his repentance, and his strength with his hair. In the shouts of the Philistines he sees the God of Israel mocked. On this account, he prays to be avenged. Although shorn of his strength, he is

* Bishop Hall's Meditations.

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assured,

assured, *the arm of the Lord is not shortened. Deep calleth unto deep.* The deep of his sorrow and misery, to the deep of God's mercy and grace. The Lord heard his voice, renews his strength, and sends him a glorious deliverance, verse 22—30. Now, *a great man is fallen in Israel.* Now Samson's race is ended; his race of glory and of shame, but his end is peace. From the history of this governor and judge in Israel we learn,

I. That the faithful enjoy the presence of that God, "Whose they are, and whom they serve."

II. That unfaithfulness, or the commission of sin, rob some of this unspeakable blessing, who yet remain ignorant of their loss.

III. I shall speak of the sad effects of God's departing, as exemplified in the subject of the text.

IV. I propose to point out their character, with whom the Lord hath promised his gracious presence; with whom he will make his abode for ever.

But let me first call upon you in the language of our church liturgy, to "lift up your hearts to the Lord" in fervent prayer, that he may command a blessing upon the word of his grace; that it may answer the great and glorious purposes whereunto

whereunto he sends it; that seeing the fatal rocks on which others make shipwreck of their faith, we may arrive in safety at the haven of eternal rest.

I. For the high and lofty one who inhabiteth eternity, to promise his abode with man, is cause of astonishment and admiration. Hence, Solomon cries, *but will God indeed dwell upon earth; behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!* How great this condescension when man was little lower than the angels! How much more so, since by sin he is cast down from his primæval dignity! Hence, David cries, *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him; that thou should visit him every morning, and try him every moment!*

Once man enjoyed the uninterrupted presence of God. *He talked with him and lived.* Then "no terror cloathed his brow." Sin broke off this communion. Conscious guilt made Adam shun the presence of God. He foolishly thought to *bide himself among the trees of the garden.* And that voice of judgment, *Adam, where art thou?* must have sunk him into the deepest despair, had not the voice of mercy said, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* In consequence of this promise, God afterwards said, *I will dwell*

in the midst of Israel. And Isaiah says, the angel of his presence saved them. Moses pleads, when in the wilderness, if thy presence go not with us, send us not up hence. A proper prayer in all our removals and changes in this mortal life. If God's presence and blessing go not with us, no happiness or prosperity can be expected.

The people of God have in all ages been supported and comforted by promises of his presence. They have pleaded them at a throne of grace, and found him faithful in keeping his promise. *God hath indeed dwelt with man upon earth. He bowed the heavens and came down. He was made flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory. His delights were with the sons of men.* The sun of righteousness arose on our benighted world. Jesus, the desire of nations, came to be a mightier deliverer than Samson. He delivered Israel from the yoke of the Philistines only twenty years. Jesus delivers his spiritual Israel from the more dreadful bondage of sin for ever.

Samson was a Nazarite to God from the womb. A child of promise. As long as he governed in righteousness God was with him. Before he sinned he reigned and conquered. Now he bows down under the Philistines yoke. *He is weak, like unto another man.* But Jesus, the true Nazarite,

Nazarite, will reign over Israel for ever. He is that child of promise, whose name is "JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." *Unto us a child is born, a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and he shall be called wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

When Samson was made a captive, the Philistines triumphed: but there is mourning in the cities of Judah. All who longed for the prosperity of Zion, might cry, "how " is the glory of Israel fallen !" But when Samson falls by death, the Philistines mourn and Israel rejoice. For *more of their enemies were slain at his death than in his life.* So when Jesus, the captain of our salvation, became a prisoner to the Roman soldiers, the enemies of God triumphed, but the daughters of Jerusalem mourned. But when the beauty of Israel was slain on Mount Calvary, all the enemies of his church were conquered. He took the spoils of death and hell. Some, indeed, saw no beauty in him, so as to desire him. They probably thought Jesus died as a fool dieth, without honour to himself or advantage to others. But *those who were waiting for redemption in Israel, saw him full of grace and truth, the fairest*
 I 3 *among*

among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. His presence was the joy of their heart, the life of their life. To them he was in his life lovely, in his death, glorious and triumphant. They walked in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and the presence of the Lord was their joy and strength. But alas! some by unfaithfulness, or the commission of sin, lose this unspeakable blessing, and yet remain insensible of their loss.

II. No age but has had its Delilahs, by whom some spiritual Nazarite has been shorn of his strength and glory. Who, like Samson, insensible of the fatal sleep, dream *of going out as at other times, and know not that the Lord was departed.* As at other times they think to go forth to their spiritual warfare, and know not that they are weak as others who are strangers to the power of Divine Grace. They perceive it not till the Philistines are upon them, and they are brought into sad captivity. Isaiah brings this charge against the people, *your sins have separated between you and your God.* The sins of unfaithfulness and sloth do this. God says, *I will be unto Ephraim (backsliders in heart) as a moth.* A moth corrodes a garment imperceptibly, and by smallest degrees.

degrees. So it is with those who in their heart depart from God.

They imperceptibly lose the presence of the spirit and grace of Jesus; they lose their first love to him; their graces fade as a leaf, when the winds of persecution and temptation arise. Their fruits of righteousness wither, their spiritual strength departs; their heart becomes the prey of every unhappy temper, every foolish and hurtful desire.

I perceive, sirs, you feel this melancholy truth, in the remembrance of him whose absence from this pulpit you lament. By what is spoken, I intend not to upbraid, but rather to apologize. And it is my earnest prayer, that like him, who is the subject of the text, "his race of glory and of shame" may end in peace. Those who are so clamorous for justice, should remember that

" Though justice be the plea, then pause on this,
" That in the course of justice none of us
" Should see salvation;
" And earthly power doth then show likest God's
" When mercy seasons justice.

SHAKESPEAR.

Being engaged in the duty of Bedford chapel, and having to preach there for him

him in consequence of his imprisonment, I could not but be interested in the sad catastrophe. I was witness to the racking anxiety, and despairing thoughts, which at first rent his distracted heart. When he said, "nothing but the apprehensions of a miserable eternity prevented his own hand from giving the fatal stab."

O how is the scene changed! When he was treading the paths of popular applause, and proclaiming to crowded audiences, *that life and immortality was brought to light by the Gospel*. How little did he then think this language would be his own?

"Ah! but to die and go I know not where!
 "Alas that dread of something after death,
 "(That undiscover'd country, from whose borne
 "No traveller returns) puzzles my will
 "And makes me rather bear those ills I have,
 "Than fly to others that I know not of.
 "The most dreary and most loathed worldly life
 "That age, pain, want, imprisonment
 "Can lay on nature, is a paradise
 "To what I fear in death."

SHAKESPEAR.

Now "the raging winds, the low'ring
 "storms and shades of night are suited
 "to the gloomy habits of his soul." Now he

he is fallen under that sad curse; Deut. xxviii. 65—67; *The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shall have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, would to God it were evening, and at even thou shalt say, would to God it were morning: for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes wherewith thou shalt see.* *

Now his foreboding apprehensions paint in all its dreadful horrors

- " That gulph of deep perdition,
- " Whence issue long remediless complaints,
- " With endless groans, and everlasting yells.
- " Legions of gasty fiends (prodigious sight !)
- " Fly all confus'd across the sickly air,
- " And roaring horrid, shake the vast extent :
- " Pale, meagre spectres wander all around,
- " And pensive shades, and black deformed ghosts :
- " With impious fury some aloud blaspheme,
- " And wildly staring upwards, curse the skies :
- " While some, with gloomy terror in their looks,

* It is remarkable that after the forgery, he was going by a church where service was performing, and going in, the preacher named these words for his text, when the Doctor was immediately struck with the dreadful apprehension of being soon taken into custody.

Trembling

"Trembling all over, downward cast their eyes,
"And tell, in hollow groans, their deep despair."

Mrs. ROWE.

Let it then be our earnest prayer, that not having found mercy here, he may find it at the bar of God ! I have already anticipated the

III. Particular proposed; the sad effects of God's departing, as exemplified in the character of Samson.

That many, like him, when *the Lord is departed*, sleep in the lap of false security, and cry to themselves, peace and safety, I shall bring the authority of Mr. Henry. He says, "we have reason to think Samson found some change in himself; and "yet *he knew not that the Lord was departed*." He did not consider that was the reason of the change. Many have lost the favourable presence of God, and are not aware of it. They have provoked God to withdraw from them; but are not sensible of the loss, nor even complain of it. Their souls languish, and are grown weak; their gifts wither; every thing goes cross with them; and yet they impute not this to the right cause. They are not aware that God is departed from them; nor are they in any care to reconcile themselves to him, or to recover his favour.

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When God is departed, we cannot do as at other times. Again, "those that have thrown themselves out of God's protection, become an easy prey to their enemies. If we sleep in the lap of our lusts, we shall certainly awake in the hands of the Philistines. When they blinded Samson, he might remember how his own lust had blinded him. They bound him with fetters of brass, who before, had been bound in the cords of his own iniquity."

"The devil doth thus by sinners; *blinds the minds of them that believe not*, and then enslaves them. Poor Samson, *how art thou fallen!* How is the defence of Israel become the drudge of the Philistines! *The crown is fallen from his head; woe unto him, for he hath sinned!* Let all take warning by his fall, carefully to preserve their purity, and to watch against all fleshly lusts. All our glory is gone, and our defence departed from us, when the covenant of our separation to God, as spiritual Nazarites is profaned."

When it is said of Samson, that *his strength went from him*, his bodily and spiritual strength are implied. Both went from him, when the Lord departed. Now his enemies have the dominion, and he

he is in captivity to them that were before his captives. He did not say with Joseph, *how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!* He fell by *those fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* That many fall by the same temptations, the objects of this charity now present are melancholy witnesses. By the same temptations too many fall, who by the grace of God, *had once escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through lust.* They lose their spiritual life and strength; their communion with God is broken off; their heart is estranged, and their affections alienated from him: the evidence of his love and favour is no more; "Clouds and darkness rest upon it." These are the sad effects of God's departing, or rather, of our departing from God: for he never so forsakes any who do not first forsake him. This brings me

IV. To point out those with whom the Lord hath promised his gracious presence; with whom *he will make his abode for ever.* The scriptures speak of man, in his natural state, as being at a distance from God; "far gone from original righteousness." *The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God.* Consequently before God's presence can be enjoyed, there must be a change, both in the heart
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and life. A reconciliation must take place. *How can two walk together except they be agreed?* And how many repeat these words, "take not thy Holy Spirit from us," who are strangers to his gracious presence! Sin is that *evil and bitter thing* that has separated between God and man. We must be humbled under a sense of its exceeding sinfulness and desert; must return to God, from every evil way, *with weeping and supplication. I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon me whom (by their sins) they have pierced and mourn.* Then we experience that godly sorrow that *worketh repentance not to be repented of.* And when it is given us to believe in him who justifies the ungodly, we can say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. David says, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? And whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there also.* But the presence of his Holy Spirit is only with them who are brought nigh by the blood of Christ; who know his pardoning grace, and have in reality possession of "that peace which surpasseth understanding." But how many rest satisfied in hearing these words pronounced by the minister,

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at the dismissal of the congregation, without knowing what this peace means ! Art not thou the man ? Where the spirit of the Lord is in his gracious influences there is this peace ; there is liberty, from the guilt and dominion of sin ; it no longer reigns in our mortal bodies. *The body of sin is crucified with its affections and lusts.* The Nazarites under the law engaged solemnly to be separate from the world, and consecrate themselves to the service of God. To such the Lord hath promised, *I will never leave nor forsake thee.*

By our baptismal covenant and vows we are engaged to be spiritual Nazarites to God, in “renouncing the world, the flesh and the devil.” That is our covenant of separation from the world and sin. And those who do not profane this covenant of grace : that better covenant which is established upon better promises than the covenant of works. Such are indeed, “from children of wrath made children of grace.” They can say, the presence of the Holy Spirit “sanctifies me, and all the elect people of God.” Christ is to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They are brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Liberty to draw near to him as to a reconciled father, through the son of his love,
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for a supply of all their wants. They are kept in this liberty, in the use of the means of grace, by the effectual fervent prayer of faith; by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God's house; reading his word, and receiving his sacraments. If fathers or heads of families, they will be found in the daily practice of (what the present right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Chester calls) "the much neglected duty of family prayer." The *outgoings of the morning and evening* will find them offering their sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving. They will *redeem the time because the days are evil*, improving their fleeting moments for eternity. Their conversation will be of heaven and heavenly things, looking for, and hastening the coming of the day of God. They find that by keeping at the greatest distance from the spirit and temper of the world, they have most joy and peace in believing. Such the Lord has promised *to keep from falling, and that they shall be presented fruitless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.* By maintaining a close walk with God, they are *lovely in their lives, and in death not divided.* By a slothful careless walk, many have lost the Lord's gracious presence; "the Holy Spirit has been taken from them," and, (like dis-

obedient Israel in the wilderness) their days have been consumed in sorrow and trouble. How doth the instance in the text forbid the strong to glory in his strength! How does it stain the pride of human glory! Therefore, *let not him that putteth on the armour boast like him that putteth it off.* Do not repeated facts speak to us this language?

"A time, fortune may keep an upward course,
 "And grace us with some wreaths of victory;
 "But in the brightest day dark clouds may rise!
 "Man touches soon his highest point of bliss,
 "And from the full meridian of his glory
 "He hastens to his setting. And shall fall,
 "Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
 "And no one sees him more!"

SHAKESPEARE.

How do we lament this truth in a recent instance! The sad cause is hinted in the text, *he knew not that the Lord was departed from him.*

In the application of this discourse I shall first address myself to the objects of this charity. You have known, by sad experience, the miserable effects of that sin, by which Samson fell. Perhaps you have been the cause of the fall of many, verifying those words of Solomon: *a whore is a deep ditch, he that is abhorred of the Lord*

Lord will fall therein. He goeth after her, as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks. She hath cast down many wounded, and many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of (eternal) death. But when your sin had brought you to shame and misery, and made you an outcast to your relations and friends; in this house you found an asylum from seducers and from want. In this sense, you are as brands plucked out of the fire; but are you so in the sense of the scripture? You have great cause for thankfulness to God, and to the patrons of this charity for the blessings you enjoy: but if you are still under the guilt of sin and the wrath of an offended God, what good can life do you? Have you then, by deep and unfeigned repentance, been brought to that fountain open for sin and uncleanness? Has this been the language of your hearts? O Lord, wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. I beseech you, let these things, that make for your peace be deeply impressed upon your hearts! Have you sinned with Mary Magdalen? O then, like her, repent. Fall at the feet of a compassionate Jesus: wash them

with repentant tears, and he will wipe those tears away. *He is exalted at the right hand of his father, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.* The riches of his grace are exceeding abundant. Plead at the throne of grace for acceptance through the atonement of Jesus, and much, yea, all will be forgiven. *Where sin hath abounded grace will much more abound. Whosoever cometh to Jesus, he will in no wise cast out.* Such is his compassion to humbled repenting sinners; he will not upbraid them for past vileness, or the number and aggravation of their sins. He came to call sinners, Magdalen sinners, the chief of sinners, to repentance. O blessed Jesus, do thou command thy blessing upon the word of thy grace, that those who are cast out by nearest relations, may find rest and peace in the arms of thy mercy! Say to some of them, as thou didst to weeping Mary, *thy sins, that are many, are forgiven thee.* O that there may now be joy among the angels of God, over some of the most guilty repenting sinners! Let not your unworthiness discourage you from looking to Jesus for pardon and peace. He is pitiful, and of tender mercy; and with him there is plentiful redemption. Does the forsaken father look with compassion on the returning prodigal, while yet afar off? Do his bowels of pity, on
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seeing him so naked, give wings to his aged feet? Does he run, and hastily fall on his neck, and by kissing him, prevent his humble confession? How much more shall our heavenly father, the father of all mercies, pardon every returning sinner, and comfort every mourner in Sion! How does this blessed truth appear in the subject of the text! And in Samson's character, all who depart from the living God (especially backsliders) may see their own. Have you profaned the covenant of your separation, as spiritual Nazarites to God? Have you broken, instead of kept your baptismal vows? Then you are exposed to the same condemnation with those objects of your charity. The scriptures have concluded all under sin.

I solicit your generous contributions this evening, towards the support of this excellent charity: but I dare not say, this will deliver you from the guilt of sin, or purchase favour with God: for only the blood of Christ can wash away sin. Only through his righteousness can you find favour with God. But he hath promised, that whatever is given to the poor for his sake, and from a motive of love to him (not in order to merit his favour) shall be rewarded in a way of grace. He will acknowledge it as done to himself. In that day, he will say, *come, ye blessed*

love and presence ! God has a controversy with you. He saith, *if any man draw back (from his ways and people) my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* But do any lament the absence of an offended God ? O then adopt the prayer of Samson, verse 28. O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, only this once, O God ! As sure as the Lord answered him, he will answer you. *His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.* Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; in answering the prayer of his people ; in pardoning their sin, and giving them the knowledge of that pardon by assured peace. Zachariah says, to John the Baptist, *thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways ; to give KNOWLEDGE of salvation unto his people, BY THE REMISSION OF SINS.* He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself ; when his faith is of the operation of God the spirit. This faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Jehovah our righteousness hath two thrones, one in the highest heavens (sitting in his essential glory) the other in the humblest heart, dwelling by the spirit of his grace. *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of an humble and*

and contrite spirit. If the Lord be denied the throne of our heart here, for the presence of his holy spirit, he will deny us a throne in the presence of his glory hereafter. Those who now say, *we will have not Jesus, the God of mercy, to reign over us,* must be under the dominion of inexorable justice; where divine vengeance only reigns; darting forked lightnings and hurling thunderbolts for ever. The day will shortly come, when we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

"Of whose judgment there is no arrest;
 "From whose sentence there is no appeal;
 "His irreversible decree condemning
 "The unrepenting sinner
 "To everlasting groans,
 "Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,
 "Ages of hopeless pain!"

SHAKESPEAR.

O be warned to fly from this wrath to come. With David, "*hasten your escape from the dreadful storm and tempest*" by flying to Jesus, *the hope set before us.* Isaiah speaks of no other than the God-man Christ Jesus, when he says, *a man shall be an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest of avenging justice.* In him alone, the guilty find pardon, and the weary rest. Holiness of heart and life; separation from sin and sinners are essential

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to our being spiritual Nazarites. Jesus, the true Nazarite, was so. When we cease to follow him, the covenant of our separation from the world and sin is profaned; the Holy Spirit departs, and the heart becomes (like any other man's) a prey to every sinful desire; to all the horrors of death and judgment. It is said of Zion, that her Nazarites, (such was their purity and holiness of life) were whiter than snow. Jesus came that we might have (purity of) life; that we might have it more abundantly, than they had under the legal dispensation. *He that is least in the kingdom of heaven* (the Gospel dispensation) *is greater than John the Baptist*, even than the immediate fore-runner of the Son of God. *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.* By the continual presence and "inspiration of his Holy Spirit, we may perfectly love him, and perfectly magnify his holy name." The administration of the spirit exceeds in glory the administration of types and shadows. The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw near to God, with more holy boldness, in the full assurance of faith. By so doing, our hope, our joy, our peace will abound. Not looking for this blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the blessed

blesſed God our Saviour, to make our hearts the conſtant dwelling-place of his Holy Spirit, many (like Samſon) fall aſleep in the lap of falſe ſecurity, and awake in the power of their ſpiritual enemies; ſhorn of their ſtrength, having loſt the beauty of holineſs. *Therefore let him that ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall.* Let it be our prayer to God, that the character now conſidered, and all we hear of, ſimilar to it, may be effectual warnings to us, that *we may finiſh our courſe with joy.* Let us plead at the throne of grace; that thoſe who have evil will at our Zion, may have no more cauſe to triumph at the fall of her miniſters; that the overflowings of ungodlineſs in our land may be ſtayed, and that they may proſper, who pray for the peace of Jeruſalem. Let us be conſtantly looking unto Jeſus, that he may fulfil in us the whole counſel of his will, and the work of faith with power. Then ſhall we enjoy his uninterrupted preſence of his Holy Spirit, and be fitted for the enjoyment of his preſence in glory; *where there is fullneſs of joy and pleaſures for evermore:* where we ſhall for ever ſing that new triumphant ſong. *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God and his father: to him be glory and dominion for ever.* Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VII.

ON

PETER'S TEARS.

MATTHEW xxvi. Verse 75.

And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

IT is a divine precept, *rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* The former many will do, but few the latter. Yet Solomon says, *it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting*: for the heart of the wise is in the former house, but that of fools in the latter.

In my present address, you will be invited to this best house, *the house of mourning*, because it is the direct way, *to that house not made with hands*; where there is

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fulness of joy. And those, who through grace, accept this invitation, will find that promise sure; *They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.*

Moses speaks of a *laver of brass*, which also was a mirror, *for the women assembled at the door of the tabernacle.* In the fall of Peter, we see a laver and mirror together. A laver in his tears, and a mirror in his repentance. A laver, through which the stains of sin may be washed away. A mirror, in which we may see how great a change must pass upon us, that we may be meet for the kingdom of God. On the occasion of Peter's bitter weeping, I shall not much enlarge. With too much confidence in his own strength, he had boasted, though all should deny thee, *yet will not I.* Yet none of the disciples, but Peter, denied their Master, though all forsook him, and one betrayed him. This fall of Peter began with following Jesus afar off. Verse 58. *Peter followed him afar off, to the high-priest's palace; and sat down with the servants to see the end.* The disciples of Jesus are in danger of falling, when they, like Peter, follow him afar off. But David could say, *my soul followeth hard after God.* And Peter's fall was compleated, by *sitting down in the seat of the scornful.* No wonder he should be asked in scorn, when

when sitting with scorers, *art not thou one of this man's disciples?* The evangelist particularly observes, that *he sat down with the high-priest's servants to see the end;* and there Peter is put in fear, and conquered, by the question of a feeble damsel, though he thought his strength sufficient for all the powers of darkness. Once the cock crows: but Peter, deaf to the faithful monitor, repeats the sad denial. But immediately after the second crowing, St. Luke observes, *Jesus turned and looked on Peter,* and this brings to him the sad remembrance of that warning voice, *before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.* His eyes became a fountain of tears: *he went out and wept bitterly.* In this action Peter answers to his name of Cephas, a rock; a smitten rock; (like that in the wilderness) from which waters flow in abundance. Not smitten by the rod of Moses, but by the piercing eye of Christ. At the two first denials, fear seemed to lock up the senses of Peter, and was as a thick cloud upon his mind. But the eyes of Jesus, those rays from the sun of righteousness, dispel this cloud. Then Peter saw how ungrateful he had been, in denying the best and kindest of masters.*.

* See Young's Night Thoughts.

"When the cock crew he wept, smote by
"That eye, which looks on me, on all:
"Which bids this midnight sentinel,
"With clarion shrill, (emblem of that
"Which shall awake the dead,) raise souls
"From slumber into thoughts of heaven."

Peter's mourning was a bitter mourning. In him that scripture was eminently fulfilled, *they shall look on me whom they have pierced and mourn, and shall be in bitterness, as one that mourns for his first-born. They shall look on me.* Yet St. Luke observes, Christ looked first on Peter; and it was a look not of terror, but of pity and compassion. This broke his heart; then Peter had the wish of the weeping prophet. *His head was water, his eyes a fountain of tears:* And ecclesiastical history says, that from this time, whenever Peter heard the cock crow, he fell on his knees and mourned; and if at midnight he arose to pray.

Thus the true penitent will not excuse his sin, will not lessen his guilt, but *judges and condemns himself that he may not be condemned of the Lord*, in the last day. He pleads guilty at a throne of justice, that he may be acquitted at a throne of grace. Like Peter, he goes out from the company and seat of the scornful, and weeps in secret. This is that which St. Paul calls godly sorrow

sorrow, which *worketh repentance to salvation*, which swells the bosom with deepest sighs, which causes us, with the publican, to smite our breast with self indignation, and cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner! Who shall deliver me from the wrath to come?* It was thus, with the royal prophet, when *he watered his couch with tears, and mingled his drink with weeping*. It was thus with Mary Magdalen, *when she washed Jesus's feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair*. Then how precious, how desirable these repentant tears! For they are an evidence to us, that the divine wrath is appeased; that the fire of his indignation is extinguished. When these happy tears begin to flow, the thunderbolts of divine wrath are dissolved, and *showers of blessing fall*. When the eyes of a penitent are bathed in these tears, Heaven is disarmed; the sword of justice falls from God's almighty hand, who acts as one that is conquered. That language in Solomon's Song, is very remarkable: the Lord says to the church, *turn away thine eyes, for thou hast overcome me*. When he spared king Hezekiah, this was the reason God assigned, *I have seen thy tears*. A divine compares repentant tears to the Jordan, in which our spiritual leprosy is cleansed; and to the pool

of Bethesda, in which our diseases are healed. But these expressions are so to be understood, as not to derogate from the efficacy of the blood of atonement, which alone can cleanse from sin. These tears are called the wine of angels, because they rejoice on their account. But all tears are not so salutary, because they do not spring from the same motives.

St. Paul speaks of a repentance, that need be repented of, and of a sorrow that worketh death. I read of the tears of pride. Some weep because they have lost their reputation. I read of the tears of hypocrisy, like those of the crocodile, only to deceive unwary passengers. I read of tears of murmuring and resentment, like those of Esau, bitter in themselves, but *find no place of repentance*; cannot turn away divine displeasure. The wicked in misery will often weep, but it is on account of what they suffer for their sins, not because they are committed against God; not love to him, but self-love causes their tears to flow. They are therefore like the sorrows of hell, where there is weeping, because of sufferings without hope of deliverance. In vain do men weep on account of the troubles of this life for this kind of sorrow worketh death. In vain do they weep because of wearisome nights on beds of pain:
tears

tears cannot heal and give them rest. In vain do we lament the dead: rivers of tears cannot bring them back. We must go to them, but they cannot return to us. But tears, like Peter's, flowing from a look of pity from a Saviour's eye, are an evidence of our being acquitted from our debt, to divine justice, of ten thousand talents. Then the diseases of the soul are healed, and we are raised from a death of sin to life of righteousness. But the procuring cause of all this, is the bloody tears of Jesus. *He, in the days of his flesh, offered up to God strong cries and tears;* therefore ours are accepted. Good Bishop Beveridge, said, "his tears wanted washing in the blood of Christ." A godly parent, who had many years prayed and wept for a prodigal son, was told, "it was impossible a child of so many tears should perish." And so it proved.

Nor is it possible that they should perish, who shed these salutary tears. O then let us look at this example of Peter, and *go and do likewise.* And is there not a cause? If not in words and oaths, yet have we not in works denied our Lord and Saviour? That charge stands against all *who name the name of Christ, and do not depart from iniquity: they profess to know God, but in works deny him.* The humility of Christ
is

is denied or despised by all who walk in pride. His mercy and meekness is despised by the revengeful and implacable. And some are said, not only to deny the Lord that brought them, but to crucify him a fresh, and put him to an open shame. This is to exceed the sin of Peter, in his sad denial. Three times indeed, he denys his Lord: at the second warning, from the crowing cock, he goes out and weeps bitterly. How often have we, in sinful works, denied the Lord! How many warnings have we heard by the sound of the gospel! Yet, how few, like Peter, have gone out and wept.

This crowing cock, which called Peter to repentance, is an emblem of the ministry of the Gospel. There is nothing of that sweet melody in the voice of a cock, which is heard from that of the nightingale; but his crowing is loud, sonorous and awakening. So the ministers of the gospel are commanded to cry aloud, to awaken sinners from the sleep of sin, and rouse them into thoughts of heaven. God says, *sound an alarm in my holy mountain.* He told Ezekiel, that to some of the people, his preaching was like a *pleasing voice of one that plays well on an instrument, they hear thy words, but do them not.* But the gospel says, *if ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them.* It commands all men
every

every where to repent. But how few obey this command!

We see changes in apparel, complexions, and constitutions. Old age daily advances, yet how few are changed in their heart and life! When Christ was going to Mount Calvary, bearing his cross, *the daughters of Jerusalem bewailed and lamented him.* But he turned, and said to them, *Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children.* If any should now lament this sad fall of Peter, I may say, *weep not for him, but for yourselves, and your sins:* those sins which made the son of God a man of sorrow. Such mourners in Zion have a divine promise, that their sorrow shall be turned into joy, and their mourning into gladness.

Isa. xxx. 19. That divine promise will, ere long, be repeated to them. *Thou shalt weep no more.* When sinners return to the Lord with weeping and supplication, he will return to them in mercy, and restore comfort unto them. They who now so return to him, *shall return from their grave with singing and everlasting joy upon their head.*

In divine writ, we find this question proposed, *Can a fountain at the same time send forth bitter waters and sweet?* In the present case, perhaps it may. Although these

these repentant tears may at first be bitter, they will soon be turned to sweetness. The joy of the world often ends in sorrow, and makes the bitterness of death more bitter. But godly sorrow terminates in *fulnes of joy and pleasures for evermore*. And when a humble penitent, thus like Peter, mourns in secret, it is from the same cause. It is in consequence of a pitying look from a compassionate Saviour. If Christ had not so looked on Peter, the cock might have crowed a thousand times. He would not have shed one gracious tear. And, like Judas, instead of going out to weep, he might have gone out and hanged himself. Peter's repentance was attended with hope and confidence in pardoning mercy: but that of Judas, with despair. Peter's was therefore a repentance unto life, but that of Judas unto death. And there was a great difference in the sin of Peter and of Judas. Peter's was through frailty and sudden temptation: but that of Judas, was a premeditated deliberate act, and arose from a rooted habit of covetousness.

Happy they, who like Peter, mourn in hope now, that they may not wail in hopeless pain for ever! For every eye must see this once crucified Saviour, and they who pierced him, and the nations who obey not his gospel, must wail because of him.

him. There is no repentance in the grave, and therefore no forgiveness there. When the sun of life is set, that eternal night is come, when none can work.

Let us see that our repentance be like that of Peter, and not like that of Judas. Many indeed, confess they are miserable sinners, yet never felt any misery for sin. Many acknowledge *they are tied and bound with the chains of their sin*, yet never felt uneasy in these chains. Those who go to the Lord's table, confess they *have sinned by thought, word, and deed*, against the divine Majesty; that they are heartily sorry for their misdoings; *that the remembrance of their sin is grievous, and its burden intolerable.*

Yet, after these humbling confessions, go out of God's house, not like Peter, to mourn in secret, but into all the vanities and follies of the age; into those things that bring the displeasure of heaven, on the children of disobedience. Such indeed eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.

But let not the humble believer therefore be discouraged from coming to the sacred table. If there were a Judas, who ate and drank at the Lord's table, in his own presence, what may we now expect? We cannot discern with certainty, between a penitent Peter and a hypocritical covetous Judas. But a day is coming, when these

these characters will be made manifest to men and angels. Let no covetous deceitful Judas then dare approach that holy table, lest it be one day said, as it was of that traitor, *it had been better for you never to have been born.* But those who know that sin is an evil and bitter thing, and mourn on account of it, are pronounced blessed. And they, who thus, like Peter, *sow in tears, shall reap the fruits of peace and joy:* they shall doubtless return from their grave with singing, to the realms of everlasting bliss. Mourners in Zion, in the church, have the promise of every consolation. But it is written, *wo to them who are at ease in Zion.* Their time of mourning will come, when none can comfort them. But hereby it will be known, when our repentance is like that of Peter. We shall go out from the Paths of sin, and forsake the seat of the scornful. We shall *chuse the afflictions of the righteous, before the pleasures of sin. We shall wait in patience, the days of our appointed time, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus, to eternal life.*

And when that Saviour shall appear, whose pitying eye made the eyes of Peter a fountain of tears; in that day, *when every eye shall see him;* all mourners in Zion shall have their tears wiped away for ever, and shall *enter into the joy of their Lord.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VIII.

O N

H E A R I N G

T H E

G O S P E L.

LUKE viii. Verſe 5.

A ſower went out to ſow his ſeed: and as he ſowed, ſome fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

THIS is part of one of Chriſt's parables, which even his diſciples did not underſtand; and he tells them the reaſon of his ſpeaking to others in parables; *that ſeeing they might not ſee, and hearing they might not underſtand*, and for this reaſon it did not profit. For if the goſpel be not underſtood, and obeyed, it muſt be a *ſavour of death unto death*. But our Lord's
M diſciples

disciples, sensible of their need of divine teaching, said to Jesus, *what might this parable be?* And he answered, *the seed is the word of God.* Verse 12. *These by the way-side, are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock, are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root in themselves, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.* And there are many of this sort of hearers, who have some joy and pleasure in hearing, who for a time, believe the truth, but when they come under various trials, *fall away* from the profession and practice of the truth. Verse 14. *That which fell among thorns, are they which when they have heard, go forth and are choaked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.* This sort of hearers are more numerous than the former. They who believe for a while, are many, but they who miss of heaven, through the cares and riches of the world, are more. But those perhaps by the sinful pleasures of life, I fear are most of all; especially at the present day, in which those pleasures abound more than in any age, since the world began. Our Lord proceeds: *but they, on*
good

good ground, are they, which in an honest good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. These words of Christ remind me of that remarkable saying of a great scholar, when he read the sermon on the Mount; "either Christ's words are not true, or we are not Christians."

The first class of unprofitable hearers, are they who may be compared to a careless or ignorant husbandman, who sows his seed in the highway, which is soon trodden under foot, or eaten by the fowls of the air. Who are forgetful, careless ignorant hearers, who, St. James says, deceive themselves.

The second class, are those who are swallowed up, with the cares of this life, and who are eagerly pursuing the riches and pleasures of the world.

A third class, are those who are religious only for a while; who do not endure to the end.

The fourth character our Lord describes, are they who shall surely be saved; who with upright and good hearts, not only hear the word of God, but keep it; not only understand it, but remember it and obey it.

That which I intend chiefly to insist upon at present, is that which is declared

by Christ, in the 11th verse. *The seed is the word of God.* Nothing so much concerns us, as to have that upright and good heart, which receives the word of God; so as to *have our fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life.* What wonderful effects would the gospel produce, were it attended with such a disposition. Dives, in his speech to Abraham, supposes, that *if one went from the dead to preach to his brethren, they would hear with attention and repent.* But he was much mistaken. *Abraham said, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* The speaking from the dead would affright many, who when their fright was over, would live the same as before.

The reason why the gospel is not always attended with saving effects upon them that hear it, is because few hear it as the word of God. Hence it is, that instead of saving some from death, it becomes the occasion of their greater condemnation. Being taught their master's will, and neglecting to do it, they are beaten with many more stripes, than those who never heard it.

It is evident from scripture, that God speaks by the mouth of the preacher, and that it is his word, that we announce,
when

when we speak as the oracles of God. Christ said to his Apostles, *it is not you that speak, but the spirit of my father speaketh in you.* Without this mission and authority from Christ, and his church, you would be under no obligation to hear the gospel. It is this that magnifies our office, and gives infinite importance to what we speak. It is this that makes it the duty of the greatest of men, to hear the gospel as God's word, who thereby declares his will to us. Sometimes God has spoken to men, by the ministry of angels. When he said, *hear, O Israel, for I am the Lord.* But whether it be an angel or a human being, that has authority from God, he requires the same regard and attention, as if he spake himself. It follows from hence, that if the gospel be heard, as if it were the word of man, it is not likely to profit any more than a tale that is told. The apostle speaking of them, who were destroyed in the wilderness, says, *the gospel did not profit them, not being mixt with faith.* They did not hear it as the word of God. And what was the consequence of their not profiting by the gospel? *Why they were destroyed in the wilderness.* They made light of the remedy God sent them, and therefore perished without remedy. And so must all

who treat the gospel in like manner. The scriptures speak of ministers of the gospel, as being God's mouth. He said to Moses, *you shall be as my mouth to the people.* To hear it therefore only as a human composition, is to make the gospel of no effect. This is to receive this grace of God in vain, to give up all the blessings of the gospel, and to be exposed to all its curses. As a human composition, there may be imperfection; but being agreeable to the divine oracles, it hath the most powerful effects. Hence, it is said, *to be the power of God through faith; mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of satan,* and the destruction of his kingdom. When the gospel is heard, as the word of man, it only strikes the ear; but when received as the word of God, it brings the kingdom of God to the heart. Hence the gospel, in its effects, is compared to some of the most powerful things in nature; to a devouring fire, that burns up the stubble; to a mighty torrent, that bears down all before it. *Is not my word as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* It is also compared to a two edged sword, that divides the soul and the spirit, the joints and marrow. But it has none of these happy effects, on some, because they hear it as the word of man and not as the word of God.

The

The gospel produces effects in them who hear it, according to the manner in which it is received. If you hear, and receive it as from the mouth of God, it will produce the most happy effects, in saving your soul alive. But if you hear it as the word of man, it will be attended with consequences, the most unhappy. You will be more inexcusable in the day of judgment, than the heathen world.

Thus it was with many of the Jews, in our Saviour's time. He announced to them the most sublime truths. He explained to them the highest mysteries, and taught them the way of salvation. And though he was their Messiah, the son of the most high, how did they regard him? How did they honour and receive his word? Why they said, *is not this the carpenter's son?* They regarded him merely as a man, as a mean man; and not raising their thoughts above his humanity; though he was the mighty God, *and spake as never man spake*, yet his word made no impression on many of their hearts.

But on those, who considered the apostles as sent of God, and as his mouth, what wonders did the gospel effect, though preached by unlearned fishermen! Peter, who had lately left his nets, to follow Jesus, became a fisher of men. In the midst of
Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, that Jerusalem, which had so lately crucified the Lord of Glory, three thousand were converted under one sermon. A little before, they cried, *away with him, crucify him*; now they cry, *what shall we do to be saved?* Under another sermon five thousand experienced the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation. Churches were soon formed in all parts. The faith was received to the extremities of the earth. But whence the cause of these wonderful effects? how came so many of the subjects of the prince of darkness, in so short a time, to become the subjects of the prince of peace? Why, because they heard the gospel, as the word of God. Some come to hear out of custom, or to pass away the time. Some, perhaps, from a spirit of malignity and censure; others from a vain curiosity, without any view, to gather the fruits of salvation, which the gospel produces in them who hear it, with an honest and good heart. How few come in that disposition of the Psalmist, *to hear what the Lord will say, by the mouth of his servant*; to hear whether *he will speak peace to me as he doth to his people*? How few come in prayer to God, *that his word may be as good seed, sown on good ground, and bringeth forth much fruit*!

This

This censure, therefore, does not fall so much on the profane and impious, who make no profession of religion. But it falls upon those who profess to be the servants of God, if they have any right to that name. What would you say to that servant, who would only obey you now and then, when it was attended with no inconvenience? And will God then own and accept the services of only one day in seven, and perhaps a small part of that day? How many neglect his service on the most trifling occasions! How many neglect the sacrament, if in the preceeding week they happen to be in a passion with a servant. But are not these tempers as sinful at other times, as in their weeks preparation for the sacrament? In the great day God will pronounce his servants to be good. *Well done good and faithful servant.* But you would not call your servants good and faithful, who only served you one day in seven. And can God pronounce his servants to be so, who serve him no better? Hence, then be assured, that in order to be accepted of God, your services must not be partial, but constant; not only one day in a week, but all the days of your life. Many make no account of sins of omission; are as easy when they omit the duties of God's house, as if they attended

attended them. But these omissions do not set so light, when on a dying bed, in the immediate views of death and judgment. Then I have known the guilt of them to lie very heavy on some, and to encrease their fears of judgment.

Such then are the causes, why so many hear the gospel, and are not saved by it. Hence this observation of a pious divine. "The preacher, after spending himself in watchfulness and study in the truths of the gospel, afterwards wastes his strength in delivering them; but some, either plunged in sleep, or full of worldly cares, pay little attention to it, or soon forget it. Such is the reception the word of God meets with from some. Instead of gathering that heavenly manna, which the gospel rains around them, like Israel, they despise or murmur,

But if men would consider the gospel, as the word of God, they must listen to it with a very different spirit, and sentiments quite the reverse. Then this house of God would be always attended with a holy recollection of mind, with an humble sense of our own unworthiness, and of the majesty of that God who is going to address you by the mouth of his servant. His divine word should be read and heard with full purpose to profit by it, and put it in practice.

practice. It should be heard with the docility of children, to know and learn their father's will, with determined submission to all its precepts, and to take with patience all its kind reproofs.

In short, the gospel should be heard with a full purpose, to give up our heart to all those motions that it shall please God to inspire, and to all those graces with which he shall please him to enlighten us. This only thought: that is God who calls you by the mouth of the preacher; that it is God who gives you divine lessons; that it is God who reveals to you the mysteries of his kingdom; that it is the Majesty of heaven, who makes known his ways to you; who announces to you his lively oracles: I say, this only consideration would awaken all your attention. Then you would appear in his holy temple, as constant as the doors are opened; you would listen to the gospel with as much humility and reverence, as if God himself were present, in all that splendor in which he appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. Then your patience would not be weary at the length of the service.

Those who spend so much of their time in mirth and festivity, never complain of lingering hours; but that they are too short. The longest nights with them are gone

gone too soon, and as Job speaks, *the dawn of the day is to them, as the shadow of death*: that is very unpleasant, because it tells them their festive hours must end. But bring these votaries of Bacchus, to the house of God, and how tedious is the hour! How much longer does it appear than a whole night spent in riot and festivity. Instead of saying with David, *a day in God's courts, is better than a thousand elsewhere*; they would say, an hour in the house of mirth, is better than a thousand in the house of God.

It was the saying of St. Jerome, that the sighs and tears of the audience should make the eulogium of the preacher. But such happy consequences cannot follow, unless the gospel be heard, as the word of God; unless it be heard with a view to get greater hatred to sin, and greater love to virtue.

When the scriptures speak of the marvellous effects of the gospel they represent, it is a holy sanctifying word, as the word of life and salvation. Hence David prays, *Quicken me, O Lord, by thy word, in which is all my hope and trust*. He says, *a young man must cleanse his way, and save his soul from death, by taking heed to God's word*. Peter says, *unto whom, Lord, shall we go, for thou hast the words of eternal life?* And
Christ

Christ said, *my words are spirit, and they are life.*

It is evident then, that the end of the gospel is to bring men into the paths of righteousness and peace. But when it is not heard and received as the word of God, or when it is heard and not obeyed, it aggravates the hearers condemnation.

This truth will appear, from what shall now be farther advanced.

It is certain that all the means of salvation, with which God furnishes a people, lay them under greater obligations to improve those means to his glory. One follows as a consequence of the other. Hence arises that threatening of God to them who obey not his gospel: *Because, when I called ye refused; therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* As if he had said, "I have sent you my word and gospel to turn you from the paths of sin, but you pay no regard to it, refusing to know and do the things belonging to your peace; therefore, instead of delivering you in your calamities, when fears of death and judgment come upon you, I shall not only be an unconcerned spectator of them, but must smite with the keenest arrows of my justice." Hence also, that severe reproach of Christ to Jerusalem, for rejecting his word. I would have gathered

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thered you, but ye would not. "How often would I have gathered you under the wings of my mercy! How often would I have dissipated your clouds of darkness and error, by the light of my gospel; but your negligence and hardness of heart, rendered all ineffectual!" For this reason, "*the things that make for your peace are hid from your eyes.*" Ye shall be delivered into the hands of your enemies, your habitation shall be left desolate, and your temple laid even "with the ground."

Hence that fatal sentence, pronounced on the slothful servant. *Thou wicked servant, I entrusted thee with a talent, which, instead of improving, thou hast laid up and not used. Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness.* To have the gospel is a talent committed to us, and for which we must give an account another day. That careless inattention, therefore, which renders the gospel unfruitful, is a sin of an aggravated nature, and makes a sinner's state without remedy.

Preaching the gospel is the chief means by which sinners are turned from the paths of sin, and delivered from the wrath to come. Those therefore, who are negligent in their attendance, or do not receive the truth, must be more inexcusable than

than the heathens, and have a more strict account to give in the day of judgment. What was the greatest sin of the Jews? It was rejecting the Gospel of Christ; for had they received that, they would not have rejected Christ himself: had they received that, they would not have crucified the Messiah. Rejecting the gospel therefore, was the cause of all the sins that followed, and that brought destruction on themselves, and on their children. By rejecting and despising the gospel, men despise their judge.

What says Christ to this purpose? *He who receiveth not my word bath him that judges him; the word which I speak shall judge him in that day.* And every one who speaks as the oracles of God, may adopt that language of our Saviour. *My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me.* It is the word of God that must inform the judgment and convert the heart. It is God's word that must stir up and warm the affections with love to Christ and his service. It is the gospel that must establish a wavering hope, and re-enkindle our extinguished love; and *faith must come by bearing the word of God.* Consequently, they who neglect it, can have neither faith nor hope; nor right love to God and their neighbour. How wonderful have

been the effects of the gospel, where it has been attended to and heard as the word of God. It has drawn the most barbarous idolaters from the worship of devils to the knowledge and worship of the God of heaven. It has dissipated the thickest darkness of infidelity, and drawn sinners out of the most dreadful abysses of vice and immorality; and it has enabled the most abandoned wretches to forsake their sins, and to live in the practice of every virtue and holy temper.

In short, it has converted many kingdoms and empires, to the profession of the faith, and will fill with inhabitants those many mansions in heaven, which Christ is gone to prepare for them, who hear his word and keep it. And such are the happy fruits this good seed will produce in all of us, if we diligently hear and obey it. But whether we will hear or forbear, still that saying in the Apocrypha were true; *great is truth and will prevail*. They who hear it as from God, will find it prevail over all their stubborn sins, and bring them into the ways of peace.

Once more. As often as the doors of God's house are opened for his service, you ought to consider it as an invitation from him, to enter them, that you may keep his solemn feasts and praise his name.

Not

Not to obey these invitations is surely an affront to the Majesty of heaven. If an earthly king set open the doors of his palace, with an invitation to his subjects to come to his banquet, to see it slighted and neglected, would be a proof that he was hated by his subjects, and that he was the object of contempt. And thus to neglect the festivals of the church, is a proof of hatred and contempt of that God who has appointed them. This is set forth by Christ in a parable of the great supper. *Many were bidden, but they made light of it*; one desired he might be excused, that he might attend his farm, and prove his oxen; another that he might sell his merchandise; and another, that he might celebrate a marriage union. But were these excuses sufficient before God, although they were lawful things? Far from it. The Lord knew these trifling excuses, which betrayed their hatred to his service, and therefore declares, *they shall never taste of his supper*; i. e. *never enter his kingdom*. Yet these were excuses that many have not to make, who have no farms to attend; no merchandise to sell; nor any marriage union to celebrate. In short, have nothing to do but to attend the worship of God, and to prepare for heaven, and yet make light of it. They have no

real excuses, and yet make them. But they ought to consider, whether they are such as will be accepted at God's bar, and to fear that sentence, *none of them who were bidden shall taste of my supper.* And it appears from Christ's own word, that the judgment of those who make light of the gospel, will be more rigorous than that of Sodom and Gomorah. They must fall the most awful victims to the keenest arrows of divine justice.

I shall conclude with briefly summing up the sense of the parable from which the text is taken. The good seed is the gospel; the sower is the preacher, and the soil is the heart of man. Some hearers are like high-way ground, where the seed is not covered, and preserved by meditation. Others are like stony, rocky ground, in which the word has no root: no root in their understanding or memory, conscience or affections. And they are offended either at the plainness, or strictness, or holiness of the gospel. Other hearers Christ compares to the thorny ground. Thorns are worldly covetous desires. They choak the good seed, shadow the blade when sprung up, and keep off the influences of the sun. Such are the effects of thorns among seeds. And the like effects have worldly covetous desires in the heart of man, rendering the
good

good seed unprofitable. But the humble christian hears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it stedfastly, applies it particularly, practices it universally, and brings forth fruit abundantly.

Satan, in this parable, is compared to the fowls of the air, which pick up the seed before it takes root in the earth. He being afraid of the success of the gospel, does all in his power to hinder its good effects on the heart. This he does by the cares or pleasures, or riches of the world, or by bad company.

In the thirteenth of St. Matthew, Christ speaks another parable about the good seed which was sown, and then this enemy comes and sows his tares among the wheat. Hypocrites, both teachers and hearers will get into the church, and mix among the upright. Christ therefore spake this parable, to show that the day of separation shall surely come. He says, *let the tares and the wheat, the righteous and the wicked grow together till the harvest. i. e. end of the world. Then I will say to the reapers (angels) gather ye first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.* Mr. Birkitt observes, "some think by these bundles, is intimated the different classes of sinners; that all drunkards will be bound in a bundle; that all sabbath-breakers will be
in

in another bundle; that all whore-mongers and adulterers will be in another; and that all gospel neglecters will be in another. How large then will these bundles be, and how large the fire that must burn them!" Let the careless and impenitent take warning! But happy they who are found among God's wheat, *who bear his word and keep it; for he will gather them with his arm into his heavenly garner for ever.*

Every time you appear as guests, at that holy table of the Lord, you may expect repeated tokens of his favour. But after having been once present at the Lord's Supper, afterwards to neglect, or turn away from it; is it not to turn your back upon your best friend, your kindest benefactor? Is it not like that language, *I pray have me excused?* of whom the Lord said in anger, *none of them that were bidden shall taste of my supper!* Perhaps this may be your last invitation: if you believed this, it would not be made light of. Above all, be careful that you forget not your solemn sacramental vows; that you walk as becomes those who have been guests at the table of the King of Glory; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries, and being faithful unto death, shall then be called to sit down with the ransomed of the Lord in that kingdom above for ever.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IX.

ON

A FUNERAL OCCASION.

To die the Christian's Gain.

PREACHED

At the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of *Litchfield*,

On SUNDAY, the 24th of *May*, 1778.

THE SECOND EDITION.

How deep implanted in the breast of man
The dread of death! I sing its sovr'n cure,
Dr. YOUNG.

REVELATIONS, xxi. 4. *1 Ham. 296.*

*And God shall wipe away all tears from
their eyes; and there shall be no more
death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither
shall there be any more pain: for the for-
mer things are passed away.*

THIS Chapter speaks of the things that
shall be hereafter; when "the great
globe itself shall be dissolved, and like
the

"the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not
 "a wreck behind." And when these things
 shall come to pass, it may be said "TIME
 "was, ETERNITY now reigns alone." Here is the most dreadful, yet pleasing
 description of the eternal states of all the
 dead: to them who live in sin dreadful,
 but to the righteous pleasing.

All of us are therefore deeply interested
 in these awful events. O may we feel their
 solemn weight! Hitherto the prophecies of
 this book have presented a remarkable
 mixture of mercy and judgment, in God's
 dispensations towards his people. Here,
 at the close of all, the day fully breaks,
 and the shadows flee away for ever. A
 new world now appears, the former being
 passed away. Ver. 1 and 2. *And I saw a
 new heaven, and a new earth: for the first
 heaven and the first earth were passed away;
 and there was no more sea. And I, John,
 saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming
 down from God out of heaven, prepared as a
 bride adorned for her husband.*

Some commentators understand all this
 of the state of the church on earth, in the
 glory of the latter day. But most agree
 it is a representation of the perfect trium-
 phant state in heaven. St. Paul calls the
 church-triumphant, *Jerusalem, which is
 above and is free, free from every mark of
 bondage*

bondage, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And this is the state here described: prepared as a bride adorned, beautified with all perfection of holiness and wisdom, meet for the fruition of the heavenly bridegroom. The blessed presence of God with his people, is proclaimed and admired. Ver. 3. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.* A learned commentator says, "here is an allusion to the tabernacle with the Israelites, and the Shechinah, or Divine Majesty, being in the midst of them." And that it denotes "the presence of Christ in his human nature." In his humiliation he dwelt, or tabernacled with men in the form of a servant: but now he will appear in all his personal glory, and reign as king.

By the text, we learn this present world is a vale of tears. In speaking from it, I propose to enlarge on the following considerations:

I. That a time is coming when this scripture will be fulfilled to part of the human race.

II. The character of those to whom these promises are made.

III. When

III. When these words shall have their full accomplishment.

I. *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* Tears are the expressions of sorrow, and sometimes its alleviation. Sorrow is an inheritance we are all born to. It is an entailed inheritance to Adam's numerous race. So Job tells us, *man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.* It was sin that opened those bitter fountains in the eyes of men. Before sin entered into the world, no sigh then heaved man's peaceful breast. No tears bedewed his unruffled cheek. No jarring passions from within to disturb his rest. No enemies from without to invade his peace. Sorrow and misery were confined to the infernal regions, "till sin brought death into the world." But "sin and sorrow are inseparable companions." And if we are not separate from sin and sinners, before we go hence to be no more seen, to be pierced through with eternal sorrows must be the consequence. Hence it is written, *come out from among them, and be ye separate from those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away, or you will be in danger of being turned out of the way of life and peace.*

And

And there shall be no more death. St. Paul speaks of death in the character of an universal monarch. *Death reigned from Adam to Moses over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* Over infants who had not actually sinned. And in the book of Job, death is called, *the king of terrors.* His empire was once limited to the infernal regions. There spiritual death set up his baneful reign. And there would his abhorred dominion have been confined for ever, had not that daring hand "plucked the forbidden fruit, which brought sin into the world" and all our wo." From that sad hour the reign of death began on earth. All kings and empires then became subject to the dark dominions. That awful sentence then began to be put in execution against the human race, *dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* (Reader, "it is all thou art, and all the proud shall be.") Death's ebon sceptre is now extended over this disordered world. As a mighty hunter, eager in pursuit of prey, his well-aimed shafts are flying every hour, bringing mortals to their long home. Sad marks of his devastation appear wherever we turn. Many mourners for departed friends go about the streets; and many more vent their sorrows and grief in se-

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cret,

cret, refusing to be comforted, and go down to the graves in sorrow. For the sorrow of the world worketh death; in some who are in the bloom of life, causing their morning sun to set at noon. Time flies from men, and they from time, "pursuing and pursued, each other's prey, as wolves for rapine, and the fox for wilds; till death, that mighty hunter, earths them all."

There shall be no more crying, on account of sin, oppression, affliction or persecution. *There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor, and the servant is free from his imperious and cruel master.* No more crying, on account of being separated from those who are near and dear to us, for their parting shall be no more. *Sighing shall for ever flee away,* and all occasions of it gone to return no more. How sudden, with many, the transition, from the highest raptures of joy to the lowest depths of wo! To-day, on the pleasing summit of prosperity, to-morrow in the gloomy vale of adversity. But in those happy regions no such vicissitudes our state shall know. Our joys will be unabated, unmingled, overflowing, everflowing. "All
"our

"our sorrows left below, and earth exchanged for heaven."

Neither shall there be any more pain; either of body or mind: but quite the reverse. Here many have wearisome nights appointed unto them, and are tossed to and fro with pain and disease, until the dawning day. But in those blissful climes, the inhabitants shall no more say I am sick. This corruptible body shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. These earthen vessels so liable to be broken by the slightest stroke, and are crushed before the moth, will then be capable of sustaining with unspeakable delight, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We shall return from the silent grave with singing and everlasting joy upon her heads. Then the evil days no more return, nor the years draw nigh, when we shall say, there is no more pleasure in them. The sun nor the light shall no more be darkened, nor the clouds return after rain. But the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. The keepers of the house shall no more tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, or those that look out of the windows be darkened. The daughters of music shall not be brought low, nor fears be in the way. The silver cord shall no more be loosed, or the golden bowl be

broken at the fountain. Because man shall no more change his home, nor mourners go about those streets of the new Jerusalem. Eccles. 12.

For the former things are passed away ; Not only sin and sorrow, pain and death, but the place of suffering these things is passed away. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the things therein, be burnt up. Every thing with which we were conversant on earth will be passed away. Seed times and harvests will for ever cease. Summer and winter be no more. In that city of the great king, the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride is no more heard. The children of the resurrection to eternal life no more marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God ; free from all human passions and affections.

Prayer and preaching, sabbaths and sacraments will be ended. But those who now make melody in their hearts to the Lord, in the assemblies of his saints, shall then keep an eternal sabbath, and sing the wonders of redeeming love with unabated ardour. Then many who cannot now procure a seat in the courts of God's house below, will sit down in the courts above, with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and a great multitude,

titude, which no man can number of every nation, language, people and tongue.

The second consideration is the character of those to whom these promises are made.

They are pointed out in the words following the text.

And he that sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. The heirs of these promises have felt the renewing power of his grace who sits on this throne. They know for themselves the truth of St. Paul's words. *If any man be in Christ Jesus (savingly united to him, by a living faith) he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, (former unholy tempers and sinful works) and behold all things are become new.* They have new desires, a new heart and new affections; they are no longer earthly and sensual, but spiritual and heavenly. Luther says, "every real christian is a new creature in a new world." And none but such can inherit that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

And these heirs of the promises are athirst for the water of life; for the Holy

Spirit in all his cleansing, fruitful, refreshing and sanctifying influences. *As the chased hart panteth after the cooling water brooks, so do they thirst after constant access to the fountain of living waters; and uninterrupted communion with God. And Jesus says, he that drinketh of the waters that I shall give, shall never thirst, but they shall be in him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. At the great day of the feast he stood up and cried, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, and receive the blessings of pardon and peace. He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters: this he spake of the spirit, which they who believe in him do receive.* These heirs of the promises are victorious over the world and sin, the corruptions of nature and temptations of the devil. Ver. 7. *Unto him that overcometh; not in his own native strength; but being strong in the faith and grace of Jesus. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, in the captain of our salvation, who hath conquered for us. He saith to all who are fighting under his banner, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. They overcome by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony.* The latter part of verse 7. speaks of these heirs of glory, as standing

ing in the same relation to God, as children to their father. *I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* They are adopted in the family of heaven, and their name is written in the book of life. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Such are heirs of all the glorious promises in this book.

The pleasing prospect through the vale of death will alleviate the sorrows of this thorny wilderness, though it may not give a full deliverance. The ties of nature are very tender, and not to feel them break by the stroke of death, is inseparable from humanity. But some sorrows are peculiar to the righteous man, the gracious heart. Such were Jeremiah's, when he cried, *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night. O that I had in the wilderness a place of wayfaring men, that I might leave this people, and go from them, for they are a rebellious house: my soul shall weep in secret places.* Such were David's, when he said, *rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not my law.* And St. Paul's, *Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose God is their*

their belly, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things. And such were the tears of Jesus, that man of sorrow, when he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, *O that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes!* But when these great events shall be accomplished, the righteous will no more weep for hardened careless sinners. Their doom will be fixed for ever. No prayers or tears can then avail for them. There is no saving repentance in or beyond the grave. All ties of nature will then be eternally dissolved. The godly will have no more painful sensation for the condemnation of the dearest relation, than for one they never new. That petition of Dives, *that Abraham would send Lazarus to warn his five brethren, and exhort them to repentance, that they might not come to that place of torment,* was not from natural affection. More probably from an apprehension of the aggravation of his own misery, by having in his life time encouraged them in sin.

The third consideration is, when these words will be accomplished.

This time is referred to chap. xx. 11 and

12. *And I saw a great white throne, and him*

him that sat on it, from whose face the heaven and the earth fled away. And I saw the dead, small and great stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. An account being given of the judge, next the persons to be judged are described, the state and condition in which they lived and died. These are the rest of the dead, who lived not again until the thousand of years were ended, ver. 5. Ver. 13, to 15. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. O the awful tremendous scenes which then will be disclosed! At this last and grand assize we shall see the Majesty of Heaven, the Almighty Judge, sit on that great white throne. We shall see the mighty Angel arrest the sun in its shining course. He will set one foot on the sea, and the other on the dry land, and lifting up his hand to heaven will swear by him that liveth for ever, that time shall be no longer. We shall hear the last trumpet eccho through the dark regions of the grave, and in the twinkling

twinkling of an eye, millions arise from earth and sea before our astonishing eyes. "Man starting from his couch shall sleep no more." "The day is broke that never more shall close." We shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, not as spectators, to see who are condemned, and who are acquitted, but as parties to answer for ourselves, for the deeds done in the body.

O sinner! remember that on thee the great judge will pronounce, guilty or not guilty. In what an agony of suspense does a prisoner stand at the bar, to hear whether he is to live or die! What marks of anxious distress appear in the countenance of his friends lest he shall be found guilty! but alas, how few are thus concerned about their own sentence in this great day of dread and decision! Whether they shall be acquitted or condemned! How few are careful daily, as they see the day approaching, to exhort, and warn their children and households, that they may escape the irrevocable sentence of condemnation! And that many will fall under this sentence, chap. xxi. verse 8, assures us. And while the words are reading, O consider whether thy character is not mentioned! *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers,*

mongers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have a part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

And do not many, called Christians, come under some of these characters? Who are *fearful* of offending man, more than God: *disbelieving* the threatenings of God against sin and sinners; *abominable* in their doings; making their boast of what they ought to be ashamed; *heart-idolaters* and *murderers*, loving money or pleasure more than God, living in malice, envy, hatred, and revenge, the very tempers that give rise to all murders: *and all liars.* But how few think it a crime to lie in their dealings for the sake of gain, or consider that God has here said, on this account, they shall be cast into the lake of unquenchable fire! Art not thou the man? O then, think of this awful sentence that awaits you, without a speedy and deep repentance! The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, that if you die under the guilt of these, or any other sins, where he is you cannot come.

And with the ungodly, *their former things will be passed away.* No more singing the songs of the drunkard. No more gratifications of their lusts and passions. No more honour from their dependants and flatterers. No more sitting
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in the seat of the scornful, shooting out the arrows of bitter reproachful cruel words against the righteous. Instead of no more pain, no more sorrow, they must suffer unabated pain, unmingled sorrows. In this book it is written, *they gnaw their tongues for pain, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.* O consider this, ye that forget God, lest you fall under this condemnation! Howsoever joyous your present day, seasons of sorrow await you. *The evil days are coming, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. When the keepers of the house will tremble, and the strong men bow themselves; the grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened. The doors shall be shut in the streets, the daughters of music shall be brought, and fears shall be in the way. The grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home.* Eccles. xii. You daily hear the sounds of mortality confirm these truths, the passing knell proclaiming the king of terrors invading your borders. Yet a little while and he will come to your own house, to your own heart, and separate you from the most tender connections and dearest relations. O see that you get prepared for the awful moment, by being clothed

clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, and cleansed from sin by faith in his blood! *To-day, while it is called to-day, if ye will bear his voice, harden not your hearts against these awful truths. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.* If the evil day of death come, when unprepared, under the guilt and dominion of sin, you must be pierced through with many, with eternal sorrows.

No beam of joyous hope will ever break into the regions of eternal death. Instead of no more crying, there will be ceaseless cries. *They will cry, the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand under it.* They will cry against themselves for having despised or made light of religion, and neglected the things belonging to their peace. They will cry against their companions in sin for having been their tempters and seducers. They will cry against their ungodly parents, for not bringing them up in the fear, the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They will cry against those teachers, who come under that description of St. Paul. 2 Tim. iii. *Lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, unboly, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, who creep into houses, leading captive silly women;*

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having

having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. And, still more dreadful to relate, they will cry against God, because he does not put an end to their existence. They blaspheme the God of heaven, because they seek death, but he fleeth from them.

But is yours the character described, that belongs to the heirs of these promises? Being justified by faith, have you now peace with God? O then forget not that to Jesus you owe this great deliverance. He wept that you might rejoice, and bled, that you might live for ever. He conquered death, and him that had the power of death, that you might be more than conquerors over the fears of death and hell. When you mourned under the guilt and burden of sin, it was his kind, though unseen hand, that wiped your tears away. When you mourned over a dear deceased friend, he bid you not to sorrow as those that have no hope to meet again in bliss. What cause have you to sing.

“How kind are thy compassions, Lord,

“How slow thine anger moves !”

The covenant blessings now received are tokens and earnest of greater things, more glorious blessings. You need not sorrow,
as

as them that have no hope, when they go down to the silent grave. As Joseph said to his brethren in Egypt, *the Lord will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land*: so at the morning of the resurrection the Lord will surely visit you, and bring you up out of your graves with songs of deliverance. And this scripture shall then be fully accomplished to all who have departed hence in the true faith and fear of the Lord Jesus. *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, &c.*

Would all of you be present at the last assize unappalled, undismayed! (Present you must be) O then take the present warning. If you would not your own blood should then be upon your head, see that the blood of Jesus be now upon your heart. Not in the sense of the Jews, who cried, *his blood be upon us, and on our children*, but in its saving and cleansing efficacy; *to sprinkle your heart from an evil conscience*, and speak peace to your souls. St. Paul says, *it speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*. This pleaded for speedy vengeance, but that for sparing pardoning mercy. To all who take warning and fly to the attonement of Jesus for refuge, the gospel-trumpet is a joyful sound of rest and peace. David says, *blessed are the people that know* [believe and receive]

this joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. That people took warning, who came to the prophet with that anxious enquiry, Watchman what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? And we have authority to assure all whose hope and trust is in the Lord, their souls shall be delivered in the darkest nights of affliction and trouble; and that songs of deliverance shall be given them in that night they sleep in death.

All who take warning, and receive the truth in the love of it, the truth shall make them free; from every distressing fear what shall befall them in time or eternity? I have now set before you, life and death, blessing and cursing. May the Lord command his blessing, that you may chuse life, and that both you and your seed may live for ever! Now to the king eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

ON

THE VISION,

AND

PRESENCE of our SAVIOUR.

PHILIPPIANS i. Verse 23.

*For I am in a straight between two, having
a desire to depart, and to be with Christ,
which is far better.*

NEVER did any show a greater long-
ing for the enjoyment of the pre-
sence of God in the public worship than
David. Being an exile, a fugitive, wan-
dering in desarts, pursued by Saul, he
often exprest the vehemence of his desires
after God. *As the hart panteth after the
water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee,*

P 3

O God.

O God. My soul fainteth for the living God. O when shall I come and present myself before the presence of the Lord! He asks for the wings of a dove that he might fly away, and find rest. He complains, that he was constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have his habitation in the tents of Kedar; among malicious and wicked men. At another time, he longeth after the courts of the Lord, after the altars of his king and his God. O happy are all they who dwell in thine house, who are always praising thee! And can christians have less fervent desires after heaven, after the courts of God's house above, than David, after his courts below? For there Jesus will unveil the beauties of his countenance, and his saints will praise him day and night. Shall real christians, who are strangers and pilgrims here below, who are like David in the wilderness, having no certain habitation, must not they sigh and long after that city of rest, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Languishing in exile, and weary of their dwelling among the tents of Kedar, must not they earnestly desire a better country? It must be so. Their faith and hope will give them wings like a dove, by which they will fly to those regions of immortality; to that Jerusalem above, that city of the Almighty King,

King, where they will see his face; whom having not yet seen, they love, and in whose smiles and favour they will rest for ever.

Hear the language of St. Paul. Judge whether his longing desires to enjoy the presence of God, are not as ardent as David's. *We groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven. Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.*

Again, *we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, and redemption of our bodies.* Had the men of this world heard these groans of the apostle and his companions after heaven, they would have accounted them of all men the most miserable; yet St. Paul says, *though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; though poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things.* And in the text, although he puts life and death in the scale, as if uncertain whether he ought to wish for, longer life for the good of souls, or for death, in order to see Christ; yet, when he consults his own happiness and inclination, he declares it *to be better for him to die that he may be with Christ.* This would be by far the most agreeable to him: *having a desire*

a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

The world is passing away, our years steal rapidly along, and soon come to an end. We know that we all must soon depart into another world. What a reproach is it, if the knowledge of the vanity of the world, of the brevity of life, and of the gospel of Christ, has not yet taught us this lesson; to desire to depart to that heavenly country, where Christ is king. The death of real christians is but a departure, a removal to go and be with the Lord. Death, thus considered, far from being the object of fear, should be the object of our desires. Death, in this point of view, is far better than life. It is useful to form proper ideas of death. The infidel looks upon it as the end of his being. A worldly minded man, looks upon it as a separation from that world he loves; a violent tearing him from all his pleasures, or riches, or honours; a taking a final adieu of all his delights. To cease from being what he was; not to know whither he is going; to be parted from all he has, without hope of seeing them again: and add to this, fore-boding fears of eternal misery; such is death to the irreligious and profane.

But

But with regard to the real christian it is to depart, and be with Christ. To that question, What is death? It may be answered, it is a departure of the soul from the body, and of both soul and body of the world, and from the company of the living. This answer indeed, has no regard to that place, whither we are going. But let not the infidel think that he shall cease to be, because of this separation of soul and body. To change one's habitation, or country, is not to cease existing; to put off your garments, is not to become nothing. When the soul departs from the body, it puts off its garments; it forsakes its lodging; it leaves its old habitation, let for a season. As you put off your garments, when at night you lie down in bed; at the morning of the resurrection, the soul will resume its wanted cloathing, and return to its former habitation. Ye worldly minded, who forget God, this change will cost you dear. You lament that this house of clay is going to ruins. What expence and pains do it cost you to repair its breaches; to strengthen and adorn it, that it may not decay and fall! Do you not, in this sense, use that language in the Psalms: *Here would I dwell for ever?* How many cares are bestowed upon this fleshly tabernacle, to repair and beautify it: but how is the invaluable

valuable tenant within neglected and forgotten! You must be driven out of it by force. You will not leave it till that dreadful Serjeant Death arrest and drag you away. Yet you know that God has not given your body to be always the habitation of your soul. It is only let to you for a certain term. Why then complain, when your lease is expired, and your term ended, when you must be put out? Not so with the real christian; he knows that here we have no continuing city; that *when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a far better habitation* to remove into; even the palace of the king of glory. He is content, yea pleased to leave this cottage in the wilderness, this earthly dwelling subject to so many inconveniences, and often half in ruins before its final fall.* We must all take our departure from the body.

Why

* The following anecdote is said to be really true:

A Baronet of the last century, whose mansion I have seen in Yorkshire, was supposed to be dead; when the following conversation took place between his jester or fool, and his servants:

S. Our master is gone!

F. Ah! whither is he gone?

S. To heaven, we hope.

S. To

Why then so many cares and fears about this ruinous house, which must soon fall ! and so little care and concern about the tenant within, the immortal soul ? Why do you live as if there were nothing so valuable as this corruptible body, and as if it never were to be forsaken of the soul ? Why forget that scripture, *the body shall return to the dust, and the spirit to God who gave it* ? But death is not only a departure from the body, but from the company of friends, and the sight of all visible things. The soul departs into a new world. Man is seen no more on earth. His relation to persons and estates for ever cease. The bonds of every connection in this world are broken by the powerful hand of the king of terrors. A thought very displeasing to

F. To heaven ! No, that he is not, I am sure.

S. Why so ?

F. Why, because heaven is a great way off, and when my master was going a long journey, he used for some time to talk about it, and prepare for it. But I never heard him speak of heaven, or saw him make any preparation for going ; he cannot therefore be gone thither.

The baronet however recovered, and this conversation being told him, he was so struck by it, that he immediately began to prepare for his journey to that country, "from whose bourne, no traveller returns."

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the unholy and profane, but full of delight to the righteous. A worldling, who is pursuing only the things of time, and has no title to an inheritance in heaven, must be uneasy at the thought of a departure from the world, to go he knows not whither; or perhaps his guilty fears tells him, he is going to that hell, to which he had often damned his own soul. But to a follower of Christ, the thought of this departure, gives joy and comfort. It makes him careful *not to set his affection on things below, and to use this world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion thereof passeth away.* Even a heathen said, "I depart out of this life, as from an inn, not from a certain habitation: for nature has given only a lodging place, not a fixed dwelling." God's word speaks of mankind, as strangers and travellers on earth. Our birth gives us entrance into the world, as a country before unknown. We travel up and down, for a short time, and then death puts an end to our journey. Why then should you be so careful, and troubled about the possessions and good things of this country, where you so lately arrived; wherein you cannot stay long, and from which you may the next moment have a summons to depart? To see how some men

men eagerly pursue after riches and pleasures; to see them with such anxiety, planting and building, and altering their plans; *rising early, and late taking rest*; entering into some new calling, or connection. May it not be imagined, they think to continue here always, or at least for some ages?

When a soldier on march has pitched his tent at night, he thinks of nothing more than a few hours rest and refreshment. We do not see him forming plans for a long stay. He doth not consider it as his dwelling place. No. But he expects an early signal from the drum or trumpet for his departure. He is every hour ready to arise and strike his tent. When a foreigner comes with his ship upon our coasts, he enters our ports. He goes up and down our cities to traffic, but it is always with an intention to depart. His business being ended, the wind becomes favourable, he weighs anchor, and returns to his own country. Mankind are like the soldier who makes a short encampment, who ought every hour to be ready, and expect the signal of departure, whether it be given at even, midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning. Hence, *be ye ready for ye know not the hour.*

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We

We are like mariners in a ship; who have cast anchor, or put into port for a short time, to make ready for a longer voyage. Perhaps this hour the trump of signal to depart may sound; perhaps this moment the wind may change, and you may launch into the ocean of eternity. O depart then, depart from an inhospitable shore, crouded with enemies and pirates, or surrounded with a thousand dangerous rocks. O happy wind, that hastens us to the desired haven! to the port of eternal rest! O pleasing voyage that removes us from dangers, and pain, and death, to the everlasting arms of our redeeming God! Well might St. Paul have a longing desire to depart from the body, to depart from the world, and be with Christ. This is the consequence of the departure of the saints; the end of their journey; the accomplishment of their desires to be with Christ.

Every soul must depart to God, as their judge, to be punished or rewarded: but all will not depart to Christ, as their Redeemer and Saviour, to live with him. He said to the penitent thief, *this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* John xviii. He prays, *that those whom the father had given him, might be with him, and behold his glory.* I pray not for the world, but
for

for those whom thou hast given me out of the world.

Hence, St. Paul says, *We had rather be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord.* He assures the followers of Christ, *they shall be ever with the Lord.* The Revelation describes the happiness of the righteous to consist in *walking with Christ in white robes*, and in following the Lamb wheresoever he goeth.

This is sufficient to show that the scriptures represent the blessedness of the just, before the resurrection, and after the consummation of all things, under the idea of being with Christ. But St. Paul seems to use this phrase, *of being with Christ*, more than any other inspired writer. This apostle seems to have enjoyed the fullness of Christ. All his actions and expressions savour of Christ; and he spake from the fullness of his heart. Although he lives, he says, *it is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me.* If he die, *he shall die unto Christ*; depart to be with him. Though he was a man of learning, brought up at the feet of learned Gamalael, yet he *determines to know nothing but Jesus crucified.* Christ is his life, his gain, his wisdom, his hope. He says, *to me to live, is Christ, and to die is gain.* Christ is his happiness after death. Hence it is taught

us, that in the present world, and that to come, Christ is the foundation of happiness. He is the life of grace in time, and of glory in eternity.

It is in his example christians may see how they ought to live here, in order to be with him for ever. He has opened to us the gate of life, and shown unto us the path of life. He has purchased for his followers, mansions of bliss, and is gone to take possession of them as their forerunner. The glory they shall possess is his glory, and when they go to him, they will *sit with him in his throne*. In short, the sight and company of Jesus will be the happiness of his saints. He is now the desire of their souls: whom they diligently seek in the night of the present life, and by the drawings of whose grace they run after him. How great their happiness and joy for ever, to contemplate the express image of the father of heaven, and be with him, in the light of the city of God! The company of saints and angels will indeed be a part of the happiness of heaven. Hence Lazarus is said to rest in Abraham's bosom. But to rest in the bosom of our Redeemer, in the most intimate familiarity; to be ravished with the sweetest and tenderest testimonies of his love; this is the most agreeable idea of the blessedness of heaven.

heaven. Wonder not then, that St. Paul should use this expression, *to be with Christ*, as all that he wished for in the world to come.

That strain of praise in Milton, is rather too high for any creature, but no doubt St. Paul could say it of his Saviour, whom he longed to see in heaven.

"In sweet communion with THEE, I forget

"all times,

"All seasons, and their changes please alike,

"Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,

"With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,

"When first on this delightful land he spreads

"His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and

"flower,

"Glist'ring with dew; fragrant the fertile earth

"After soft showers; and sweet the coming on

"Of grateful ev'ning mild, the silent night,

"With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,

"And all these gems of heaven, her starry train,

"But neither breath of morn, when she ascends

"With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun,

"Nor fragrance after showers, or silent night,

"Without THEE is sweet."

But those who are strangers to the sight of the rising sun, and glist'ring dew. Who when others breathe the first and sweetest breath of morn, are surrounded with an artificial night, or drowned in sleep and sloth, cannot adopt this pleasing language.

Q 3

Again :

Again: by this expression of the apostle is taught, that we cannot be with Christ, while we are in the present world. We must depart to be with him. Once it was the happy privilege of the apostles to be with Christ on earth. But, *henceforth, he is no more known according to the flesh*: he is ascended above the heavens, that our hearts may be drawn to him. If he had always remained in this world, who that loved him, would desire to depart from him? But he is gone before, and his people must follow him through the gates of death, which he passed. *He is gone to his father, and our father, to his God and our God*, may all his followers say. They need not say with a heathen emperor, "O my soul, the tenant and companion of my body, thou art soon going to wander in dark, and cold and horrible regions."

The righteous have a better hope. They know where Christ is gone: they are following him, and they know the way; and when they are got to the end of the shadow of death, they will have more cause to say, than Peter and John, *Lord, it is good for us to be here*. There they will see Christ, *resplendent with light, with Moses, Elias, and the prophets*. There they will see all the saints
in

in their white robes, and hear the harps and voices of the heavenly hosts. There they will be transfigured and transformed into the full image of Christ, and dwell with him for ever in the holy mount.

But this desire to depart and be with Christ, is far from the generality of christians. Were I to ask every one present, had you ever this desire? Few, perhaps, could say, it had ever been in their thoughts!

Many, indeed, in times of deep distress and affliction, will wish to depart, in hopes of deliverance from trouble; but many have this wish, who are strangers to a well-grounded hope of being with Christ. All they want is to be free from pain and misery. Hence, some rush into eternity by the stroke of their own hand. But the real christian will not fly to a pistol, or a precipice, like Cleombrotus, who, after reading Plato, *on the immortality of the soul*, threw himself into the sea. We are not to desire to depart, but in God's time and order. We must wait till he sends his messenger, to strike off our chains, and open the prison doors. Yet even some of the people of God have been wanting in this patient waiting for Christ. In a time of trouble and persecution, Elijah said, O
Lord,

Lord, now take away my life. Jonah wished the same, saying, *it is better for me to die than live.* But God knows this best. And such were the troubles of Job, that with all his patience, *he chose strangling rather than life, and longed for the grave, as men for hidden treasures.* All this arose from impatience in suffering; not from the same desire the apostle felt, to be with Christ.

But I must hasten to a conclusion, by a brief application. Should the hour of your departure from the world be now come, have you a well-grounded hope to be with Christ? What company do you expect to go into beyond the grave? You have heard that saying, "tell me what company a man keeps, and I will tell you what the man is." Evil communications corrupt good manners." A judgment may be formed, what is likely to be your company in a future world, by that you keep in the present. Those who with David can say, *my delight is with them who excel in virtue,* in death will depart, *and be with Christ and his angels.* They, whose chief delight is with them, *who are lovers of sinful pleasures more than lovers of God,* will have the same company in the regions of eternal darkness. They must,

in death, depart, and be with the fallen angels, and the black deformed ghosts of horrid murderers! A dreadful departure to the ungodly! But a happy departure to the righteous: for *all who die in the Lord*. For *they shall rest from their labours and troubles* upon earth, and be with Christ for ever. When you see the tender lamb running to and fro, restless, and expressing its plaintive bleatings, the reason is, its separation from the dam. So will all who are really the *sheep of Christ's pasture*, be restless and unsatisfied, till they are blessed with the sight of him: till they are admitted into *his presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*.

THE END.

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 two, be restless and unquiet, till they
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 are clothed in light, where there
 is shadow of night and darkness in the world.

3 NO 63